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THE INDIAN PRINCESS.

BY MRS. ANN S. STEPHENS,

AUTHOR OF THE FOLLOWING DIME NOVELS:

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THE INDIAN PRINCESS.

CHAPTER I.

THE GOVERNOR AND HIS TWO CHARGES.

DARK and heavy gloom lay upon the castle of St. Louis—a gloom that spread like gray mist over the city of Quebec, and was felt, in a greater or less degree, throughout the province. Count Frontenac, Governor of Canada, was the soul and center of that funereal gloom, for, out of his bosom had been torn the one sweet hope of his life. She whom he called wife was dead—dead by poison! The love of his early years, and whose loss, by marriage with his brother, was the cause of his banishment to Canadian wilds, had, after years of sorrowing, returned unto him a widow, bringing all the devotion of a first love as her offering. Great was the rejoicing over the count's marriage—splendid the reception given him by all classes of his devoted subjects. Days of feasting, receptions fetes, state ceremonies, followed her advent, as if to crown the Governor's great happiness with new evidences of the love of his people. In the midst of this carnival of affection came death—death in its most heart-rending shape; and the great joy was suddenly turned into a sorrow so deep and funereal that even the stolid Indian was moved to awe. Canada was indeed a land of mourning.

There was left to the count his wife's daughter by her first husband, the count's brother; and this girl, fair, good and beautiful, was the one bright sunbeam that still remained in the desolate stateliness of the castle.

This young girl had mourned her mother's loss with keen sorrow; and even now the gladness of her fresh young life was sometimes clouded by the remembrance of the suddenness with which death had swept away all that was most precious from her life. But youth is always hopeful; and a creature so light-hearted as Adele could not dwell in darkness forever. While her uncle and step-father gave himself up to a proud, reticent sorrow, she grew resigned, and, at times, almost cheerful.

There was another inmate of that stately old castle—a dark-haired, black-eyed creature, of a beauty so wildly grand that you recognized her presence there with a sort of terror, as you might start to see a panther basking in some flower-garden. This girl was the daughter

of Count Frontenac by the daughter of an Indian chief. Her mother, a wild thing of the woods, had, in the Indian fashion, been recognized as his wife; but she died, poor thing, of a broken heart, as we see forest-birds perish in their cages, leaving this girl behind, thenceforth to become the bitter-sweet of her father's life.

Month after month had crept by since the lady of the castle had been laid in her grave, but her husband still was lost in the depths of a sorrow so solemn that he lived almost alone. A few hours of the day given to public business was all that he knew or cared to know of the outer world. At all times Adele had access to his presence; but even her bright face and winsome ways could not draw him from the gloom of his memories. As for Katharine, his half-savage child, her presence only plunged him in deeper gloom, and she, with that haughty reserve which suffers but makes no sign, withdrew into a remote room of the castle, and seldom crossed his path. Sometimes, when she heard his slow footsteps in the hall, Katharine would turn like a wild creature listening for its mate. Her eyes would brighten—the breath would come pantingly from her half-open lips, and she would poise herself as if to leap forward and cover him with caresses—but as his footsteps came near, the light would go out of her eyes; the lithe limbs would relax and settle back to a crouching attitude, and she would steal away with her great eyes full of tears that burned like fire as she proudly withheld them from falling. Thus the wild Indian girl seldom came face to face with her own father, and was in reality more alone than she could have been in the deep forest to which her mother had been native. But time will do its beneficent work. As it weaves moss over the crumbling ruins, and flings a drapery of ivy over broken battlements, it creeps with a gentle touch over the human soul, and draws it back into the brotherhood of human life.

Before the anniversary of his wife's death came around, Count Frontenac had begun to smile again; but very faintly, and as men smile who wish to be grateful for blessings which they can not as yet enjoy. With this partial cheerfulness came back a strong sense of duty. From the pang that came with a thought of his Indian child, he recognized the force of her claim upon him. He knew well that humiliation and trouble would always connect themselves with this young creature, and his heart ached with remorseful tenderness when she crossed his mind, but he accepted the pain and the duty as an expiation; and when the time came that he emerged from the deep dream of his sorrow, his most anxious thought was of Katherine—she who was half the time brooding over her loneliness in a remote room, fitted up as a hunter's lodge, and which had been the sylvan bower-chamber of her mother.

One evening, just after the remembrance of this duty had impressed itself on his mind with peculiar force, the Governor and his niece, Adele, were walking slowly up and down one of the grand corridors of the castle. She was conversing with him in her own

sweet way on subjects which most interested her, when all at once he saw a light form dart into the corridor and out again. It was Katherine. Frontenac started, paused an instant, then called her by name. The young Indian uttered a cry of joy that went to his heart; then, with the bound of a young panther, she sprung upward, locked her arms around his neck, and pressed kisses upon him as if she were tearing up flowers by the root.

A faint shudder ran through the count's form, but he struggled with himself and pressed the girl to his bosom. Katherine felt the drinking chill, and froze under his enforced caresses.

"How does it happen that I have not seen you of late?" he asked.

"Monsieur did not send for me," she replied.

He looked at her more fixedly, and saw how much she had grown during his months of abstraction. She certainly appeared several years older than Adele, and was truly a striking type of singular and magnificent beauty. Adele was gazing at her in wonder at the glow that had kindled her face. It seemed to her that she had never, in the whole course of her life, seen any thing so beautiful. Katherine did not seem to notice her, but, in reality, her eyes took in even the minutest particular of her dress and expression.

"Look at her, look at her!" whispered Adele. "Heavens, how lovely!"

"You must not be afraid and run away from this young girl," said the Governor; "you should be pleasant companions for one another. Katherine, you must throw aside your wild habits and cheer each other in your solitude."

"I love you very much," exclaimed Adele, holding out her hand with her natural frankness. "Will you let me kiss you? The last time we met you would not."

Katherine submitted to the caress, but with the wonderful dissimulation born in her nature, she concealed every show of emotion. She only seemed a little shrinking and timid, but betraying through it all a certain pride which pleased the Governor.

"Will you try and love me?" Adele asked.

"You don't want me to love you," was the short answer.

Adele looked at her in surprise, and answered sweetly:

"Indeed, I do."

"I am an Indian," she said, in reply. "You know *that*!"

"I wish I had Indian blood in my veins, if it would make me as beautiful!" exclaimed Adele with a *naivete*, which, at another time would have made the Governor smile.

Katherine's lip curled a little—her heart was divided between two feelings—that of pride and power, and of a burning jealousy. The two were now so mingled that she could not have separated them; but they left no room for weaker emotions, such as other women possess.

"Will Katherine always live here, papa?" Adele asked.

"Yes," replied the Governor; "but Katherine is a true wild bird of the forest; you can not tame her."

"But you will try to be more like us by and by," said Adele.

A warning pressure of the arm which the Governor held made her pause.

"We are both orphans," she continued, sadly.

"I have only my grandmother, Ahmo," said Katharine, "and she is an Indian woman—a chief's widow. But even her they have driven far into the forest."

"Will you take me to see the place where she lives—down to the island where you so frequently go?" asked Adele, eagerly. "May I go, papa?"

"We will see; the weather will soon grow too cold for expeditions of this kind."

"I can wait. You will stay with me all the time, will you not, Katharine?" pleaded Adele. "I have so wanted a friend of my own age; and now that I have caught you, my beautiful wild-bird, you shall not run away again."

The Governor look kindly at the girl; his heart was so softened by a great grief, that he reproached himself for not having controlled the wild impulses that threw her on the alert to flee away and hide herself.

"Kate," he said, "Adele will go to school at the Ursuline convent. We were just talking of it. I wish you to accompany her."

Katharine bowed in silence. Her resolution was formed like a flash. If the pale-face studied books, so would she; there should be no art in which she too would not surpass, even if it were hard reading, which she abhorred with all the pride of her savage nature. Her Indian pride and thirst for power filled her whole being with a new resolution.

"That will be charming!" exclaimed Adele. "We can study together, and I will teach you to play the harp."

The Governor was summoned away upon some business. Even his sorrow had to give place at times to the duties of his position. Important affairs had accumulated upon his hands during his long sorrow, and now they must have attention.

Adele threw her arms about his neck and kissed him again and again; he held out his hand to Katharine, which she panted to kiss, but his arm was around Adele. The Indian girl would have died sooner than have touched her lips to it—nothing could make her stoop to that at that moment. She touched the fingers as an equal might have done, and swept a courtesy that she had seen practiced by ladies who came to the castle. Frontenac went away, wondering where the creature had learned her queenly bearing.

"Come to my room," said Adele, drawing her along the hall. "Then you must let me come to yours. I always find the door locked."

Katharine yielded.

They entered the richly-furnished chamber, and Adele showed her all her girlish treasures. There were numberless trifles of which

Katharine did not know the use or even the name, but she evinced no surprise. When they went into Katharine's lodge-like room, Adele was not so stoical; she could not cease marvelling over the Indian relics. Katharine had preserved these relics, which had been brought from her grandmother's lodge on Orleans island.

"And can you shoot with this?" she asked, taking up a bow, which, with all her strength, she could not bend.

Katharine nodded.

"You see those bird-skins; I shot them all. I once killed a deer."

"Teach me; oh, do teach me, you angel?" cried Adele, quite beside herself with admiration. "But you must have a room near mine; this is cold and bare. I will speak to papa to-night."

"I like this chamber," Katharine said; "I am a wild girl of the woods; I should smother among your carpets and thick curtains."

"After all, this place looks like you," said Adele. "These furs and wild trappings are like the forest. Oh, I shall come here often. You must love me very much, will you? I have been so lonely since mamma died. You never would come near me."

Katharine answered by a smile; it was so sweet, and so softened the dark beauty of her face, that Adele flung both arms around her.

"Come, let us talk together," she said.

They sat down in the window seat, and Adele talked freely in her interest, never observing how little confidence Katharine gave in return. She wept bitterly when she spoke of her mother, and Katharine consoled her with gracious superiority.

Adele was almost crushed by her mother's loss. The meeting with that strange girl, half savage, half relative, had animated her for a few moments, but her spirits had not recovered from the shock they had received, and she pined for sympathy, as only the young can.

"Why do you weep?" said Katharine, lifting the skirt of her dress and wiping the tears from Adele's blue eyes that turned upon her in gratitude, as a periwinkle looks of a more heavenly blue when the rain is shaken from its leaves.

"Oh, let me cry. Sometimes it seems as if my heart would break," cried the gentle-hearted French girl. "I am so much alone, and this is a dreary place—you must know that, Katharine?"

"Yes, I do know it. Haven't I had a mother, brighter, grander, more beautiful than yours—and did not I see her die?" cried the young Indian, passionately.

"But that was before we arrived from France. Mamma was not to blame for that. How soon my mother followed yours to the grave!"

"Perhaps they have met," said Katharine, with a strange smile curving her scarlet lips.

"I hope so. Indeed, I hope so, for they were both good," said the French girl, in all the innocence of perfect truth.

"Never, never," cried the young Indian, pushing Adele from her.

"What—what do you say?" cried Adele, affrighted by the storm that swept over that dark face.

Katharine settled down on the window-seat, like a tiger cub in its lair.

"I say the great hunting-grounds are broad; there is room for all," she answered, in a low voice.

"Yes, room for all," repeated Adele. "But God will take care of his own. We need not fear for our mothers; they are with him; but you and I are left with only papa and each other to love. Let us be good to each other."

Katharine received Adele's kiss, and the two girls parted.

Every day after this interview Adele sought the Indian girl. Next to her father she clung to Katharine for love and sympathy. She was constantly with her when not occupied with the Governor, and really appeared fascinated by the Indian's strange, original conversation, and the wonderful beauty which already began to be the marvel of Quebec.

The Governor did not attempt to place any restraint upon the intercourse of the two girls. He was too kind-hearted not to pity the situation in which Katharine was placed, and probably often blamed himself that he could not give her more affection; but she was connected with a portion of his life so sad and painful that very often it was difficult for him to support her presence with composure.

Adele was never weary of sounding her praises to him, and he loved her the more for this gentle kindness to the Indian girl.

"Katharine is so beautiful, papa!" she would cry. "She is like a tropical bird that I had in France. I love her so much. She shall always be my own dear friend, my black-eyed sister."

He replied, in his sad, weary voice.

"Poor Katharine is very fortunate to have won your love."

Sometimes remarks like those reached the girl's ears, and helped to foster the savage jealousy that seethed and burned in her heart. Adele was never weary of lavishing proofs of affection upon the girl. She shared with her the beautiful books and ornaments which she had brought from France, consulted her wishes in all things, and was so meek, so devoted, so patient, that she must have won kindness and pardon for her unwitting fault from any heart less resolutely cold and hardened than that of Katharine. Indian by blood, subtle by instinct, jealous by nature, revengeful by association with her old grandame, who hated the French, and whose hand had ministered the fatal draught to Frontenac's bride, the young girl was, even in her most demonstrative moods of affection, apart and alone—a mystery to all save to herself. Her own soul—how she looked down into its depths to read her future there!

And sweet, gentle Adele; how fruitlessly her young heart was flinging out its kindness! She might as well have charmed a hawk from the prey it swoops upon as attempt to win affection from that mysterious creature, in whose heart rioted the blood of antagonistic nations. One moment all love, then all hate—a being to fear and shrink from, even in these, her years of girlhood.

For a whole year Katharine had been almost forgotten under her father's roof. She had seen the fair, golden-tressed child filling a daughter's place to the Governor, her own father. Hidden behind pillars and in dark angles of the wall, she had, herself unseen, watched the grateful looks which he bent upon that sweet face even in his deepest grief, while her own heart panted for one look to appease its hungry craving. She knew well that the best blood of his proud heart was beating in her own veins; he was her father, her own, own father; she his only child; what right had he to fold that young face to his bosom and kiss so tenderly the golden hair of another man's child? What business had she to look so happy when he smiled upon her? Sometimes she had forgotten to look up, and so wasted the smiles that Katharine was dying for; and there she sat, crouching in some dark nook like a moral beggar waiting for crumbs that never fell. Is it a wonder that this Indian girl, with her ardent, uncurbed nature, should have grown fierce and bitter, and that dragons' teeth were sown, in that heavy time of mourning, which no care could ever uproot from her after life?

CHAPTER II.

CONVENT LIFE. KATHARINE'S PENANCE.

THUS thrown into close companionship, the two lived for a time in a certain degree isolated from the rest of the world. Adele had but few companions of her own age, and none that she considered at all equal to Katharine, whose society she sought at every leisure moment.

The Governor was greatly occupied; but whenever released from public affairs, Adele always was sent for to cheer the loneliness which he found insupportable.

He was a proud, almost heart-broken man—silent, melancholy, retiring as much as possible from society and longing for nothing so much as quiet. His love for Adele was the strongest feeling grief had left in his heart, and upon her he had centered all the affection which the memory of her gentle mother had kindled in his life.

Adele was never so happy as when with him. She always could cheer him even in his darkest hours. Katharine seldom was sent for—her presence had become almost painful to the Governor, although he was kind to her, and would have done any thing in his power to make her future contented and happy.

Katharine had ceased to show the slightest trace of feeling upon the subject, but no victim to the tortures of her savage forefathers.

ever suffered keener agony than she endured without a visible sign or murmur.

Love for her father had been the one tender feeling in her nature; deprived of that, there was nothing to combat the fierce impulses which made such riot in her breast.

When she found how studious Adele could be, she applied herself at once to the books which she had formerly disregarded; the progress she made was absolutely startling. Adele regarded her as a perfect prodigy, and was never weary of showing her every thing in her power. Needlework Katharine turned into a perfect art. She combined with it all the gorgeous taste for coloring, so apparent in the savage, with the deft invention for which Adele was so remarkable. When the fair girl was thus employed, Katharine would rival her with a spirit of contemptuous scorn. But when Adele would return from a visit to the Governor, with an enthusiastic account of his kindness, Katharine would leave the room in order to control her passion, though she never spoke more gently nor smiled more affectionately upon Adele than at such seasons.

As the cold Canadian winter came on, these two beautiful girls were sent to the Ursuline convent and placed under charge of the sisters. Adele soon became a pet for the whole school. By many of the boarders Katharine was coldly regarded, on account of her mixed blood, although it did not do for any one who wished to be Adele's friend to show that feeling in her presence.

The good sisters of the convent hardly knew how to understand the strange Katharine, but she succeeded so wonderfully in her studies that they were constrained to overlook her utter disregard of rules, and allowed her all the liberty their laws would permit. She did not attempt to mingle with the girls; if any of them sought her out she was courteous and pleasant, and had already a singular charm of manner which gradually made itself felt upon her companions in spite of their prejudices. Only once or twice during her stay at the convent did the terrible violence of her temper break beyond all bounds, and then she frightened the poor sisters quite out of their wits by the outburst.

One day in class, when an old sister, especially beloved by the pupils for her affectionate disposition and timidity, was explaining to them some point in religious history, and all the group were supposed to be listening with great benefit and edification, they were startled by a little scene that was the talk of the convent for weeks after.

There was one girl who held Katharine in special dislike, and never omitted an opportunity of annoying her in every way possible, although heretofore Katharine had passed her by with scorn.

That day Mademoiselle Fanchon was in a more tantalizing humor than usual. She whispered to her neighbor that she meant to make the wild Indian girl angry before she left the class. After trying the several little expedients of "provoking" girls, she hit upon an

effective plan. Being quite a novice in the art of sketching, she quietly drew upon a leaf of a book the figure of an old squaw loaded with baskets. It was a capital caricature of the old Indian woman seen almost every day peddling baskets through the streets of Quebec. Underneath her sketch she wrote "Katharine's Grandame." This was passed along the class and excited the risibility of all. Coming to Adele she would have suppressed it, but Katharine seized it. One look was enough. She sprung like a leopard upon the offending girl, and seizing her by the hair, dashed her to the floor—then placing her foot on the girl's neck, stood with folded arms—the impersonation of a Nemesis, her great eyes glaring like balls of fire, and her bosom heaving wildly with emotion. The terrified classmates did not stir, and old Angelique was fairly petrified with astonishment and horror. In a moment the Indian girl took her seat, bestowing upon her fallen enemy a look of intense scorn. Angelique at once dismissed the class and summoned the Sister Superior, whose grave manner indicated the weight of the sin committed.

Katharine on being summoned appeared, preserving an outward calmness, but showing, through her eyes and face, the fierce fires burning within. The Superior asked her the cause of her conduct. Drawing from her bosom the offending picture, she held it in her hand, while she exclaimed:

"I shall show it is to *Monsieur le Gouverneur*, my father, to see if he permits me to be called to account for resenting such insults."

Her demeanor proved to the good old sisters the danger of venturing too far in a reproof for her conduct, feeling, also, that her indignation was in a degree excusable, considering the offense given. They could only order the still unreconciled girl to go to the chapel, where, by communion with the Virgin, she might regain her peace of mind. Katharine strode from the door out into the hall, to find Adele awaiting her coming.

"Oh, my dear Katharine, what did the sisters do?"

"They ordered me to go to the chapel and there pray for the Virgin to forgive me!" she said, contemptuously.

"Oh, that will cure all! It is so good to pray to the Virgin—it is so soothing and peaceful in that holy place. Come, let us hasten;" and Adele, taking her hand, would have led the way, but Katharine did not stir.

"I will not go at anybody's orders. If I go it shall be at my own time and will. There is no power here that can make me go!"

The Indian fury again blazed from her eyes, yet the gentle Adele was not abashed.

"I know that, Kate; but, if you would only go for my sake!"

Those were strange feelings stirring at the girl's heart as she looked at the beautiful French girl pleading thus anxiously with her. Katharine felt nothing but supreme contempt for the religious rite, she saw practiced in the convent, for she clung firmly to her Indian faith in spite of the development of her mind and the examples every

day before her eyes. Her religious guide had been her half-idolatrous old Indian grandmother.

She felt a desire to go into the chapel for the mere purpose of showing her scorn for its holy rites, and that feeling overpowered her wish to resist every species of control or authority.

"Do go, Kate," whispered Adele.

"I will," she answered, quietly. "Yes, I will go."

Adele wound her arm about her waist and drew her away down the corridor.

When they reached the chapel-door, Katharine motioned her back.

"I will do my penance alone," she said, haughtily.

"I should like to go in for a few moments," returned Adele. "I was so angry with Fanchon this morning that it would relieve my mind to say a prayer before the Madonna."

Katharine drew back and allowed her to enter the chapel. Adele walked on with bowed head, her thoughts stilled by the impressive quiet of the place, while Katharine followed, her lip wreathed with a haughty smile, and her eyes fastened upon her companion with an expression of contempt.

When they reached the altar, Adele knelt, and made a sign to Katharine to follow her example, but the girl stood erect and cold, looking like some beautiful but rebellious spirit mocking the holy influence of the place.

The chapel was a lovely spot, fitted up with good taste and richness, and adorned with many beautiful pictures and statues, which had been the gift of the Count de Frontenac. The light fell softly through the stained glass-windows, and played in countless rainbows over the tessellated floor, tinging the altar and its rich decorations.

The air was still heavy with the perfume from the censer, which had been kindled at the morning office, mingled with the odor of the flowers upon the altar. Every thing about the place was calculated to produce a strong effect upon a mind even naturally careless of religious observances, but they produced no effect upon Katharine.

As Adele knelt before the great picture of the Madonna, a very soft, clear light struck the picture and was reflected upon the upturned face of the girl, till it might have seemed, to an imaginative mind, that it was a visible sign of peace and love emanating from the Virgin upon the innocent child.

When her devotions were concluded, Adele arose and turned toward Katharine, her face speaking the calmness and rest which that silent communion brought to her spirit, and wearing its most pure and spiritual type of beauty.

"Say a prayer for Fanchon, too," she whispered; and stole softly away, so subdued and touched, that it seemed to her sacrilegious to awake a single echo in the solemn silence of the place.

She went out, and the heavy door closed behind her. Katherine stood there for some moments, looking about, while a girlish desire for amusement crept over the sterner thoughts which had been in her mind.

She kindled the censers, and amused herself for . . . in carrying them to and fro, and inhaling the aromatic perfume which was peculiarly pleasant to her. Then she set them on the altar, and looked about for more interesting employment. The altar was decorated with beautiful flowers, which were always preserved even in the depths of the terrible Canadian winters.

Among the ignorant people of Quebec there was a superstition that those flowers were not placed on the altar by mortal hand, and that they were preserved unwithered by the especial interposition of the Virgin. The good nuns never attempted to contradict the harmless credence, although they taxed all their powers of ingenuity to preserve a store of blossoms for the required uses. They kept large quantities of flowering plants; besides, one of the old nuns was skilled in wonderful secrets, which enabled her to preserve all manner of flowers perfectly fresh, by keeping them in hermetically-sealed boxes. The art is now common enough, but, at that time, it was little understood, and, in the convent, was kept a profound secret among a few of the older members of the order.

There had been a *fete* the preceding day, so that the altar was unusually rich in its floral decorations.

Katharine at that age had a great love for the beautiful, and excelled in weaving all manner of beautiful garlands, so that her skill was often called in to aid the sisters, although it depended entirely upon her humor whether she saw fit to exercise her talents at the time required.

She took a rich curtain and laid it down on the altar-steps, recklessly despoiled the vases of the flowers, overturning one or two in wanton disregard, and deluging the altar with water. Then, casting herself upon the cushion, she began weaving a garland, while she chanted in her rich voice a savage war-song, which she had caught from old Ahmo, her now banished grandame. It was a strange mixture of the sacrilegious and ridiculous. One moment the girl's face reflected the hard, impious thoughts which flashed through her mind; then a gleam of youthful fun would dance across it, as she fancied the terror of the whole convent when the deed was known. But all the while she went on with her task, till the long braids of flowers trailed down the altar-steps and clung about her lap in perfumed festoons.

The flowers were all woven at last, and Katharine meditated upon the next available species of mischief. Near the altar stood a statue of some renowned saint, and on the other side was a pedestal, intended to support its companion when it arrived—the Governor having ordered one as a present to the chapel during one of his visits to France.

Katharine hastily tore off a rich scarf that decorated a figure of the Virgin and threw it over her shoulders, took the gilt crown and placed it on her head, twisted the garlands of flowers about her neck and waist, and, as some voice in the corridor warned her of an ap

proach to the chapel, she bounded on the pedestal and stood there in an attitude so full of statuesque grace, that, in another place, it would have filled any beholder with speechless admiration; but, in the gloom of that sacred spot, the act seemed almost the work of some infernal spirit who had taken possession of that beautiful form.

The girl had been two hours in the chapel, and the Superior having learned through Adele that her command had been obeyed, was so delighted with this unusual proof of the Indian girl's submission, that she went to the chapel herself to put an end to a penance so honorably performed, and grant her pardon for the fault she had committed.

There was no one with her but sister Angelique. As they passed down the hall, the good old woman conversed about the strange girl, and congratulated themselves upon this astonishing change from her former disregard to rules and behests.

"This may be the beginning of a better state of things," said the Superior.

"I am sure she can not pray alone before that beautiful Madonna without having her heart softened," said pious sister Angelique.

"I have no doubt we shall find her in tears and full of contrition," returned the Superior.

"It can not be otherwise," acquiesced her companion.

They reached the chapel door, opened it gently, and looked in. They could see nothing of Katharine in the half light, for their old eyes were feeble with time and long vigils.

They crossed themselves silently and passed up the aisle. As they neared the altar, the Superior caught sight of the havoc which had been committed, and uttered a groan of horror. It was echoed by a cry from sister Angelique, whose eyes were riveted upon the figure which now crowned the hitherto empty pedestal. In her half-blindness she did not recognize Katharine, and the first thought of her superstitious mind was that, by some interposition of the saint whom they had intended to honor, the niche had been filled in this marvelous manner.

The Superior's groan made her turn, and revealed to her the desolation reigning about the altar. While roused by her exclamation, the mother glanced toward the niche. They rushed up to the pedestal and saw Katharine standing there, calm and immovable, her eyes fixed intently just over their heads, as if perfectly unconscious of their presence.

Their first thoughts were only of the horror and sacrilege of the act. They fell on their knees, counting their beads and groaning prayers to all the saints in the calendar to preserve the convent from the consequences which they feared must follow this terrible deed. In the mean time Katharine stood surveying them with the most marblelike indifference and true Indian stoicism.

They rose from their knees, and a more mundane feeling of anger came over the Superior's mind.

"Come down!" she shrieked. "Wicked, impious girl, come down!"

For the first time Katharine's face dimpled all over with fun. She bounded down from her perch and alighted like a cat on the marble floor.

"The Virgin preserve us! the saints forgive!" groaned sister Angelique, again falling on her knees, while the Superior seized Katherine by the shoulder.

"Go out!" she cried, trembling and half-frantic. "Go!"

"Take your hand from my shoulder!" hissed the girl, a spasm of rage taking the place of her former mischievous enjoyment of the scene.

Angry and terrified as she was, the Superior could not dare that look. She dropped her arm, and Katherine walked out of the chapel without deigning to cast a single glance behind.

When they had a little recovered from the shock which they had received, the Superior and Sister Angelique followed as fast as their tottering limbs would permit.

Matters had reached a crisis at last. The Superior locked the chapel, so that none of the boarders might learn what had happened, and sent in all haste for the archbishop and the Governor. She could not trust her own judgment then. The bishop and Frontenac knew better how to deal with the savage girl than the two superstitious women, and in the end, the matter was quietly settled.

Sister Angelique took a vow of secrecy, and the affair never transpired in the convent, although to Katherine it was one of the most triumphant incidents of her life.

CHAPTER III.

THE RETURN OF A SHADOW.

THE next day Katherine managed to steal from the convent, while the sisters fancied her doing penance in her room. She had made herself so well acquainted with the environs of Quebec, that she threaded the streets which led along the river, as if she had been born among the lowly people who dwelt there. She did not pause, however, but kept on, hastening along the shore of the St. Lawrence till she reached a little cove, choked up with the wild vines and a thick growth of coarse shrubbery.

Katherine looked keenly among the vines, as if searching for something; many a time before this had she been in the same spot, with that wistful, anxious look on her face, and had gone away dissatisfied; she found no one there.

She was about to leave the cave now, and, with a sigh, turned to retrace her steps; but in her change of position, she caught sight of a string of wampum tied to an alder bush.

With a thrilling cry, and the leap of a deer, she sprung upon the bush and tore away the wampum. She sat down on the grass and kissed it wildly; she pressed it to her forehead, her lips, her heart, and great tears leaped from those superb eyes as she gazed upon what seemed only a soiled fragment of beadwork.

After a time she started up, looked at the sun and laughed aloud when she saw how high it was. Then she tore frantically the vines and undergrowth down by the water's brink, and dragged out an old canoe that lay hidden under them—it was sodden and discolored, but not the less fit for use. A paddle lay in the bottom; seizing it she leaped in and pushed out for the stream. The current was swift and she used the paddle as a bird sways his wings in the air. The canoe fairly skimmed the water, as a hawk plays with the waves. Every dip of that paddle sent up a flash of silver. As she went, the Indian girl burst forth into a joyous song, and so kept time with her progress.

At last she neared Orleans island, and slackened her speed among the turbulent waves that swelled out from the eternal dash of waters that poured down the Montmorenci falls. It was dangerous navigation there, and the canoe rocked on the tumult like a lotus flower cast adrift from its root. In her eagerness, she had urged herself into danger. As her little craft was leaping and plunging in the whirl of waters, she heard a shout from the island shore, and saw a canoe coming toward her swiftly as arrows leave the bow. It was an old woman, with a dark, withered face, and eyes that gleamed like fire as she swept her little craft onward.

“Mahaska—Mahaska!”

Katherine heard the cry and answered:

“Grandmother, come fast, come faster! I am searching for you.”

Then the canoes came in contact with a light dip of the prows, and there, in the reeling waters, the two Indians embraced. Then the canoes shot away together, like swans sailing abreast, and Katherine sprung upon the shore and laughed gladly, as she shook the spray from her hair.

“Oh grandmother, you are here at last! You have come back from the forest to see your child. You have been gone so long.”

The old woman drew close to her, and stood with her arms folded

“Yes, Ahmo has been gone long and far; she has visited many nations—seen many chiefs. She promised the pale-face chief, your white father, to go away from his sight forever, and she will keep her promise—for he must not see her here again.”

“But the Governor did not order you away; you banished yourself, on that sad, sad day when the great crime was discovered,” said Katherine, deprecatingly, for she saw in Ahmo's eyes the old fires burning there which seemed to have been lit over Chilleli's grave.

"Yes, I know. I killed his white wife with poison because I thought he had murdered Chileli. He did not kill Chileli—I was wrong—I have banished myself for the crime I committed; yet, *I am here!*" Her look was one of commingled hate and love.

"You came hither to see Chileli's child!" said Katherine, as she placed her arms around the old woman's neck.

Ahmo did not speak for some moments. Her face assumed a look of anxiety, distrust and pain; but this soon passed away, and soon her features gleamed with an inward satisfaction.

"Mahaska has grown tall as the pine and as lithe as the reed. She is very fair—fairer than my Chileli, her mother; and her heart is the heart of the great chief, Chileli's father!" This she said, gazing upon Katherine as she stood before her. Every feature of Ahmo's face was alive with the feeling of pride which filled her heart.

Katherine did not move or reply, but stood up proudly, as if conscious that she merited the compliments of her grandmother.

"Does Mahaska rejoice that Ahmo has come?"

"Yes; I am so weary of the castle, so sick of the pale-faces and their ways, that I am doubly glad to see my own kindred. It is good for Mahaska's spirit that Ahmo has come. She has been waiting long for her," said the girl, with decision.

"Yet Ahmo would have never returned if the chiefs had not ordered. Ahmo murdered the Governor's pale-face wife—the mother of the golden-haired child that the Governor loves and has taken to his bosom; and for that she went away into the wilderness nevermore to return; but the chiefs have ordered otherwise, and I am here!"

"What have the chiefs ordered?" inquired the girl, in vain trying to suppress her eagerness.

Ahmo looked long and silently at her; both were as unmoved as basilisks; they seemed as if a part of the forest—a human part, yet as if dumb creatures of the woods.

"We will go to Chileli's grave!" at length said the old woman, solemnly. She turned and led the way up the shore of the island, to the spot where Chileli slumbered beneath the great elm. The grave was still and undisturbed as if the spirit of peace kept watch and ward over it. The old elm swung its leafy arms over it like a censor, and the winds sighed softly through the branches as if talking to the guardian of the spot. It was a solemn place, impressive in its associations, and stirring in its memories.

Ahmo glided around the grave twice or thrice, her lips visibly moving, but uttering no sound. She seemed as if communing with her own thoughts. Katherine stood apart, her great eyes filled with tears. How she loved her mother! How she mourned her death! She then felt all her loneliness, all her neglect by the Governor, and, too, all her hate for the child who had come between him and her. Her Indian soul swelled within her with an undefinable emotion, strangely made up of love, hate, ambition and pain of restraint.

"Chileli sleeps well," said Ahmo; "is Mahaska's heart a peace?"

Mahaska's heart is on fire!" the girl almost shrieked, as she struck her bosom with her clenched hand. "Mahaska tires of life. She longs for freedom. She is not treated as an equal in the castle. She is not loved; but *she shall be feared*," she fairly hissed, while her eyes glared like those of a leopard driven to its lair.

Ahmo's eyes shot back an exultant fire. "Does Mahaska forget that she has white blood in her veins?" she asked, as if to taunt the girl.

"She *had* white blood there once, but the fire in her bosom burned all the white out of it; her blood is now dark—darker than the Indian's; it is the blood of one who *hates* the pale-faced race as the bison hates its hunter." Her words rung out strong and clear; and the waters of the river that went rushing by seemed to catch the word "hate" as to echo it.

"Does Mahaska still desire to remain with the pale-faces, or would she come again to her people and be one of them?" asked Ahmo, as if not moved by the girl's words.

"She desires to leave the castle, to seek the woods and to become one of her people; but Mahaska is not one of the people—she has the blood of a great chief in her veins, and she shall rule her people as a queen. If she does not rule, she will not seek their lodges."

"It is well! Ahmo has a message for Nemono's grandchild. She shall visit the lodge and hear it; then she shall know of the destiny in store for her and her race."

The two passed into the depths of the forest, and soon came upon the old lodge. It stood there as if but yesterday vacated, perfectly unchanged. Carefully surveying it, Ahmo entered and soon beckoned Katharine to follow.

It was three long hours before Katharine came forth. She looked care-worn, but passed rapidly down to her canoe, like one conscious of power and eager to meet her destiny. Ahmo did not appear until late at evening, when she stepped out, gathered brushwood for her fire, and evidently prepared to tarry on the island.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ISLAND TRIP.

THERE was a holiday at the convent, but neither Adele nor Katharine was sent for to spend it at the castle, as the Governor was absent at Montreal.

Most of the girls had gone into the city to spend the day. The

nuns were enjoying the unwonted relaxation from duty in their own quiet manner, so that the gray old nunnery was even more silent than usual.

Adele, quite tired of her own society, tired of the needle-work and books with which she had been trying to slace her solitude, started to seek Katharine, that she might at least have the satisfaction of bewailing the dullness of a day which ought to have proved so pleasant. Katharine was out in the garden, sitting in the sun with a book on her knee.

Adele crept up behind her and laid her hand suddenly on her shoulder. An ordinary girl would have shrieked in nervous fright; but Katharine's quick ears caught every sound, and light as the step had been, she had heard it. She looked quietly up from her book in silence.

"What a girl!" exclaimed Adele; "any body else would have screamed."

"I am not nervous, you know," replied Katharine; "although they have partially civilized me, they have not taught me *that* accomplishment. Besides that, I heard you coming."

"And I stepped so quietly!" said Adele. "Why a bird would not have heard me."

"I have been trained in the forest, you know."

Adele threw herself on the bench by her side, and yawned dolefully.

"Isn't it stupid?" she exclaimed. "One would think we were being punished instead of having a holiday."

"Why didn't you go home with some of the girls?"

"Oh, I didn't wish; I was so disappointed at not seeing papa that I should have had no enjoyment. What are you doing?" and she pulled her book away with the air of a spoiled child. "Reading history, as I live!"

"Certainly, one must do something."

"All about Boadicea, queen of the Britons! How can you?"

"She was a grand woman," exclaimed Katharine; "a true queen!"

"Oh dear me, I always feel afraid of her—then she was a heathen, too, and very wicked."

Katharine only smiled her contempt.

"Please don't read any more," said Adele; "do talk."

"Very well," returned Katharine, as her companion impatiently put her book on the grass. "What shall we talk about?"

"Oh, I don't know—I feel so stupid!"

"You do look a little dreary."

"What can we do to pass away the day?"

"Madame has given us leave to do any thing we like."

"But what good is that when there is nothing to do."

"I have something."

"What is it? Do answer. Mayn't I go with you—are you going out?"

"You would not wish to go—you would be afraid."

"Into the wood is it? Oh, I am not afraid with you."

"I am going to row up to the island—I am going to see my grandmother's old lodge."

"Oh, how delightful! Do let me go with you. I am crazy to go. You will find me ill when you come back if you leave me here alone."

After a moment's thought Katharine replied:

"You can go if you wish, but only on condition that you never mention having been to the island, nor speak of any one we may find there."

"Oh, you dear girl! I promise every thing," cried Adele, "I will be mute as a mouse."

"Is it out of curiosity?" demanded Katharine. "Do you want to play the spy about the old Indian woman's lodge that you may come back and laugh with your companions about the way she lived?"

"Oh, Katharine, how can you be so cruel?" exclaimed Adele, so hurt that the tears rushed into her eyes. "You know I love you too well for that; you never knew me to do an unkind thing, I am sure. Besides, you have talked so much of your grandmother that I want to see the place where she lived."

"You may go," replied Katharine, quietly.

"But would you *like* to have me?" she asked, timidly. "I don't wish to be in your way."

"Little baby!" she said, laughing. "Go and get yourself ready."

"I must speak to Madame."

"Very well; say that you wish to go out with me. Remember I don't choose all the world to know where my poor old grandame lived. The girls would be rushing up in a body to see the lodge. Madame is such an old goose she tells all she knows."

Adele flew off to demand permission, and soon hurried up to Katharine's room, exclaiming:

"I can go, she says I can go, for a long, long walk. She says there is no danger in the woods with you, only we must not go too far. If there are any wild-flowers in blossom she wants us to bring her back a quantity of them."

"I dare say there may be some on the island. Are you ready?"

"Yes, all ready. Oh, Kate, now you can teach me how to row." Katharine nodded.

"But you'll be afraid if we meet any one strange."

"No I won't—I am not *quite* a baby."

They went out of the convent and took their way toward the forest, coming out upon the river-bank in the place Katharine was in the habit of secreting her canoe. She did not choose Adele to be in her confidence as she said:

"Look, there are some early violets—gather them while I look for the canoe. It used to be somewhere near this place."

Adele bounded off, and before she could return, Katharine had the light canoe in the water, and was sitting in the bottom.

"Now you musn't stir," she said, as she helped Adele in; "the thing tips at the least motion."

Adele looked a little frightened as, with one vigorous sweep of her paddle, Katharine sent the frail bark out into the stream. But she repressed her fears lest Katharine should laugh at her.

"You look a little pale," said the girl.

"No, no; it made me dizzy at first, but it will soon be over."

In a few moments her nervousness wore off, and she entered fully into the enjoyment of the wild expedition, more charming to her from its novelty.

"Isn't it delightful?" she exclaimed. "And what a lovely day! Oh, Kate, how beautiful the woods are."

"You have seen the Falls?"

"Yes, once; Madame took me there last fall—don't you remember? How splendidly you paddle. Oh, if I only could learn."

"It would be too hard, and we are in haste—when we are coming back, perhaps I will let you try."

"This is charming," Adele rattled on. "I am so glad I did not go with the girls. I like so much being with you. Does it please you to have me, Kate?"

"One always likes to have roses near," she answered.

"How pretty! You always say the sweetest things. But sometimes I think you do not like to have me with you."

"I can not be so demonstrative as you are—it is not in my nature."

"That is true; my Kate is like no one else; but you are my own beautiful friend."

"Sit quietly or you will be in the river."

Adele laughed gaily; her fears had quite departed.

"Oh, there is the island," cried Adele.

"Hear the roar of the cataract," said Katharine.

"Is it not grand? It fairly makes me tremble."

They came in sight of the Falls. Adele was silent with awe. To Katharine it was like the face of a friend; it always seemed to speak a language she alone could understand, and she gloried in thoughts of it.

They soon reached the island and Adele bounded lightly upon the reensward, looking about with enthusiastic admiration.

The trees wore their brightest mantle of green; the grape-vine formed a thousand natural arbors over their heads; the first blossoms of spring enameled the turf; the woods were alive with birds; all this made up a scene of luxuriant beauty.

"So beautiful! so beautiful!" Adele exclaimed again, as they took the path through the woods.

Quickly they were in sight of the lodge. The smoke curled up peacefully against the clear sky. With its rude walls covered with early vines, the lodge looked picturesque and graceful.

Katharine uttered a cry like a quail calling its mate.

"What is that for?" asked Adele, in astonishment.

Katharine put up her hand to enjoin silence. In an instant an answering cry sounded on the air.

"It was to warn my grandmother that I was bringing a stranger to her lodge," said Katharine, in explanation. "She answered that you were welcome."

They passed on, and as they gained the front of the lodge a wolf-skin curtain at the entrance swung back, and the old Indian woman stood in the opening.

Katharine made a warning gesture, which Adele did not perceive, but the squaw required no such caution. Although, at the first glance, she recognized the girl, yet she betrayed no emotion save that of pleasure at the unexpected visit; but Katharine's practiced glance could read the hate which burned in her heart at the sight of her visitor.

"I have brought the daughter of the Governor chief to the lodge," she said.

"The maiden is welcome," returned the old woman, in broken French, but with great dignity and courtesy. "She is fair as a young blossom, and pleasant to look upon as a spring morning."

She motioned them to enter the lodge, seated Adele upon the richest couch of skins, and treated her with the consideration of an honored guest.

Adele looked about in pleased astonishment. The lodge was commodious. The quantity of furs upon its walls and floors, and embroidery on the couches, gave it even an appearance of luxury.

"What a pleasant place to live in," said the surprised Adele; "no wonder you like to come here, Katharine. I am greatly obliged to you for bringing me."

"The Indian woman has only plain food to offer. Will the white rose eat?"

Adele accepted this hospitality with eagerness; the trip had given her an appetite unusually keen.

"You shall have venison and fish, my grandmother says," said Katharine, gayly; "but you will only get corn-bread for a relish."

"It will be charming after the poor fare at the convent," said Adele.

The old woman went through a back door to the outside, and began her operations. In a few moments the odor of the viands cooking before the fire came pleasantly through the crevices.

"I am so hungry," said Adele.

Katharine herself arranged the table after the fashion of the whites, while Adele aided her, both laughing and talking gayly. But Katharine did not lose sight of the old woman. She had good reason to fear some act of treachery toward the guest, and acted warily. Unobserved she passed out into the open air and looked over the old woman's shoulder. She held a reed in her hand, and was pouring a few drops of a colorless liquid into the cup intended for Adele.

"Fool!" she whispered, as the woman turned fiercely upon her. "Would you ruin us both?"

"No, no; the pale-face would live for months, but wither after drinking the cup as surely as flowers die when touched by the frost."

"You shall not do it," replied Katharine. "She shall not be harmed! I have said it!"

"So be it," replied the woman. "Let Mahaska decide."

Adele called her friend that instant, and Katharine hastened in to her. She had no fears in leaving her grandmother, knowing that she would not disobey the injunctions given.

The meal was served and the two girls enjoyed it thoroughly, Adele happy and gay as a child.

"Now we must have a long ramble in the woods," she said, when the repast was concluded. "I want to gather some flowers for the good mother."

Katharine complied with her request, and they wandered for some time over the beautiful island, every moment increasing Adele's delight. Occasionally Katharine would startle her by some wild feat, such as catching the limbs of great trees and swinging herself high in air, or leaping down dangerous steeps; but mingled with this fear were a profound admiration and excitement, which gave her terror a sort of charm.

"We must go back," Adele said, at length; "It will be nearly dark when we reach the convent."

"It would be pleasant to frighten the old souls out of their wits by staying away," said Katharine.

"Oh, no; they would never let me go out again. We must go directly home."

"Little obedience! come back to the lodge and bid my grandmother good-by, then."

The woman parted from Adele with every expression of kindness.

Katharine took her seat in the canoe and pushed it from the shore. When they were in the middle of the stream she laid her paddle across the little craft and leaned her elbows upon it.

"Adele," she said, very seriously, "you have promised not to tell where we have been, or that you have met my grandmother on the island."

"Yes, Katharine, I have promised."

"And you will keep the promise?"

"Indeed I will, Katharine."

"Remember, it extends beyond the school, even to the Governor."

Adele looked a little troubled, but she answered, firmly:

"I will mention this day's visit to no one."

Katharine's face brightened, and, with a graceful sweep of her hand, she dashed her paddle in the water.

CHAPTER V.

THE TWO VISITS.

IN the seclusion of the convent three years passed. Both Katharine and Adele made such improvement that the Governor, still lonely in the grand solitude of his home, began during his frequent visits to hint of taking them away.

"Katharine will be glad of that," said Adele; "She was remarking only yesterday that the sisters had taught us all they could."

"I never expected she would have stayed here so quietly," observed the Governor; "It must have been a hard struggle at first."

"Katharine never complained," said Adele, "and she has studied night and day. For weeks together, when the sisters thought her asleep, she would be studying in advance of the others. I assure you, papa, she is much wiser than I am."

The Governor looked at the young girl with yearning fondness. She grew more like her mother every day. The same blue eyes that had won his heart—the same quick smile. The unutterable sweetness of her voice was pitched so precisely in the same key that, when he heard it suddenly, the sorrowing man would start, almost believing that he had heard those tones which could never again meet his ear until he passed over the dark waters.

"I have asked Madame's permission to take you home for this evening and to-morrow," said the count, resuming the conversation in order to break off the tide of recollection which even yet, if he gave it free course, swept with such wild power over him.

"How delightful!" exclaimed Adele. "You are such a darling, good papa! I love you better every day, and yet every day that seems impossible."

The Governor responded with grave affection to her caresses; his thoughts had gone so far back into the past that it was difficult for him to appear gay without an effort.

"Shall I run and tell Katharine?" asked Adele, anxious to share her happiness with her friend, who had not yet entered the parlor.

"Katharine will not accompany you," he answered. "I wish you to meet some friends of mine who are desirous of knowing you. They feel no interest in her; she is a stranger to them; it would not be pleasant either for her or for them. We will therefore leave her here."

"I hope she will not be disappointed," said Adele, always fearful of causing her friend the least pain.

The Governor smiled tenderly upon her. This evidence of generous sensibility pleased him greatly.

"Always thoughtful of others' comfort," he said, patting her hand. "But I am certain that Katharine will not care in the least."

"I doubt if she will care much myself," returned Adele, after an instant's reflection. "She is never willing to waste time—I am a sad idler, you know."

"You are every thing that is sweet and good," he replied, folding her to his heart with a sudden ebullition of feeling.

"Shall I go back with you?" she asked.

"I am not going to the castle yet," he answered. "I have business in the city—I will send for you before evening."

"Good papa! Hark, there is Katharine now."

As she spoke the Indian girl entered the parlor, her proud bearing partially subdued under an affectation of humility it often pleased her to assume in the Governor's presence.

She returned his greeting pleasantly, but she was no longer the child who had shown such passionate devotion. The Governor looked troubled. He saw her so seldom now, that her presence always reminded of her mother, and that memory was a painful one—he never could forget or forgive himself for the sad life and mournful death his love had brought upon the poor Indian mother.

She entered into conversation without the least embarrassment, and the Governor could but marvel at the keen, subtle intellect which betrayed itself in every remark, while her beauty struck him as something resplendent—an impression it had never before made on him.

He tried to feel for her a portion of the strong affection he gave Adele, but it was very difficult; he pitied her, he could be generous and kind, but her presence was associated too closely with the darkest, gloomiest memories of his life to make it pleasant to him.

One thing he hoped, that her convent education had wrought such an entire change in her habits and life that the savage instincts of her nature would gradually be rooted out and give place to the gentler, softer feelings caught from companionship with Adele, his *beau idéal* of all that was feminine and lovely.

He was not aware how much liberty the Superior allowed the wild young creature, partly because she believed it to be his wish, perhaps more because she had long before learned how useless it was to attempt opposition when the girl had once fully decided upon her course; and he trusted that, as she saw any of her mother's people so seldom, they could not again acquire any influence over her, now that she had escaped from the ignorance of her childhood.

Adele's visit to the castle was spoken of; Katharine evinced no displeasure, though her proud heart beat with anger at the idea of being excluded from her father's house.

"They are old friends of my family and that of Adele's mother," said the Governor; "I knew you would not care to meet them. If there were to be any festivities, of course I should take you also."

"You are very kind, sir; I thank you. I hope Adele will enjoy herself."

Adele kissed her gratefully.

"She is such an angel, papa! Always thinking of my happiness."

When the count had gone the girls went up to their room, Adele talking eagerly all the way, while Katharine seemed to listen, though her thoughts in reality were upon the slight she had received from her own father.

"Kate, *cherie*," said Adele, when her father had gone, "we are going to leave the convent this fall; are you not glad?"

"Yes," she replied, quietly; "it will do me no good to stay here any longer."

"Papa says you grow handsome every day," continued Adele, "and I believe you do. Indeed, Kate, you are very beautiful."

"I have permission to go out this afternoon," said Katharine.

"Where are you going? You have more liberty than anybody else; papa insisted upon that when you came here."

"Oh, yes," she said, scornfully, "he pitied the wild Indian; he knew she would fret her heart out if they bound her too fast."

"Why do you talk about being an Indian?" said Adele; "you are growing like all of us, every day, only brighter, more—"

"I shall never be like you," she said, passionately; "my grandfather was a savage chief, a king! I am an Indian princess. What are you, compared to *that*?"

"Oh, what a pretty title," said Adele; "and you look like a princess, you darling bird. But where are you going?"

"To my grandmother—she wants me. But remember your promise never to mention her."

"How do you know?" asked Adele. "No one has been here to see you. Of course I shall say nothing about it."

Katharine took a string of wampum from her bosom, and held it toward Adele.

"I found that in the garden an hour ago," she said; "it is my grandmother's sign."

Adele looked at her in wonder.

"Every thing about you is so strange," she said; "no, you will never be like other girls—but you are the best, most incomprehensible darling that ever existed."

She gave Katharine a score of caresses, to which the proud girl submitted quietly, although her feeling of repulsion for the warm-hearted girl grew every day deeper and more bitter. No evidence of affection ever made her heart, for a single instant, waver in its steady dislike. In secret it had grown so deep and profound, that she panted often for the unnatural and truly inhuman vengeance which must, in some shape, one day or another be her own. But she could wait—her Indian blood had taught her that lesson—she could wait and watch, yet her victims could no more escape her than a fawn could have evaded the pursuit of a she-wolf.

"I must make ready for my visit," said Adele. "I wish you were going too, Katharine; I shall not half enjoy it when you are absent."

"I would rather have my solitary journey to the lodge. I don't feel in a humor to meet strangers."

She soon escaped from Adele and hurried off to prepare for her own day's visit.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FUTURE QUEEN.

KATHERINE went out into the forest that afternoon, and took her way through its tangled paths toward her grandmother's lodge.

It was a beautiful day, and Katherine breathed more freely in the grandeur of the woods. Had she been differently trained, happy and contented, the forest would still have been her favorite home, for she was too completely an Indian in her instincts ever to love the artificial restraints of civilized life.

She came out upon the river a mile or two beyond the city, treading the path with the ease of familiarity, and looking about as she reached the bank of the stream as if in search of something.

A canoe was hidden among the logs and underbrush, which her grandmother kept there for her use when she chose to start from that point.

Katherine dragged it out of its place of concealment, seated herself in the bottom, and a few sweeps of the paddle sent her shooting through the current with a swiftness which made the bright foam fall in a sparkling shower about her.

There was a sort of relief in this physical exertion; it took her mind away from the black thoughts which her conversation with Adele had aroused; and the sense of freedom she had in that trackless solitude, made her pulses bound with delight.

The light canoe flew down the river like a tireless bird. Every instant increased Katherine's feeling of exultation and pleasure at having, for a time, escaped from the thralldom of her every-day life.

The beautiful island was in sight, glowing in the richness of its midsummer luxuriance, lying spread out before the great cataract like the summer palace of the nymphs who haunted the fall. It would have been a tame fancy, indeed, that had not woven all manner of poetical imaginings in looking on the scene. Katherine's soul was fully capable of taking in and appreciating all the beauty of the sight. She had in her nature a mingling of strange qualities, such

as one finds among those spirits of evil like the Borgias, whose names are written in such terrible characters upon the annals of history. She exulted and reveled in whatever was grandly beautiful; she had the eye of an artist and the imagination of a poet, blended with the savage ferocity of her native disposition.

As her canoe neared the island she checked its speed, paddling close in to the shore, pulling her little boat along by catching at the overhanging bushes and vines which grew close to the water's edge. Caution and the glad exuberance of her spirits, made this kind of hidden movement a keen delight.

Suddenly she started; her eye caught sight of a canoe moored on the shore of the island. She was sure that it did not belong to her grandmother. Some one from the city must be on the island. Ahmo was there and might be discovered! Katherine's heart beat quick as she thought of this peril, and she prepared to guard against it. Shoreing her own canoe she sprang to the land, and as she gained a little rise of ground, which looked like a beautiful meadow in the midst of the forest, she heard footsteps near. Looking up she saw a young man just emerging from the forest. He had paused suddenly at the sight of her, and stood gazing at her movements in an attitude of admiring wonder. Her cheeks were flushed with the exercise; her hair had broken partially loose from its coronet of feathers, while the Indian decorations which she added to her dress to please her grandmother's fancy, all helped to heighten the effect of her wild beauty.

In the instant that they stood there Katherine's quick eye had taken in his whole appearance. With the first glance her heart took fire, and hoped to meet him. He would never be forgotten—never! This truth blazed in her eyes and burned on her cheek; at first sight she loved him! He was quite young; the delicate beauty of his face, almost too handsome for a man, was relieved by an expression of firmness and decision which kept it free from any charge of enmity. He wore the uniform of a French officer, but Katharine knew that he could only have recently arrived at Quebec, as his appearance was perfectly unknown to her, and his air was that of a person recently from court.

Katharine was a strange, incomprehensible girl, with a weird destiny before her. Love and hate sprung simultaneously in her soul, like the sudden bursting of a tropical tempest. She herself could not understand the sensation which shot through her heart as she looked at the stranger; but one of her wild fancies rose up like a prophecy—that man was to have an influence over her future. *He was to be her master!* She never laughed at herself for her superstitious fancies—she believed them prophetic; and, indeed, they often appeared so, although it was undoubtedly the effect of that belief acting upon her imperious will which made her pursue them unhesitatingly until they became realities. After the first silent moment of astonishment, the stranger approached her, courteous holding his hat in his hand.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "may I ask if you have seen a canoe near here? I landed on the island to explore it a little, and have foolishly mistaken my way back."

"It lies yonder," she said, in French as perfect as his own, pointing through an opening in the trees.

"I beg ten thousand pardons; it was very stupid of me," he said, laughing gayly. "However, I must thank my folly for giving me the pleasure of being set right by you."

She bowed silently, her eyes half veiled by their heavy lashes, still taking in every detail of his appearance.

The stranger, in turn, with all his high breeding, could not restrain the curiosity which she had excited in his mind. He had never seen a creature so beautiful, yet she was so unlike any woman he had ever met that he was puzzled to decide as to what race she belonged to.

The partially Indian dress contrasted so strangely with her French accent and the polished grace of her manner, that he could find no clue to the mystery.

"Is the island inhabited?" he asked, suddenly.

"Were you seeking some one?" inquired Katharine, in breathless dread, forgetting to answer his question.

"Oh, no, mademoiselle; I had idle hours on my hands, and rowed up to see the Falls. Mademoiselle resides in Quebec, I suppose?"

She bowed assent.

"I almost thought I had seen the fairy princess who owned this enchanted island," he said, with the exaggerated gallantry of the time.

Katharine smiled at the compliment; from most men such words would only have excited a feeling of haughty repulsion, but from his lips they gave her a strange pleasure.

"I suppose the beauty of the day attracted you forth as it did me?" he said, anxious to continue the conversation.

"I love the wilderness," she replied, with exultant fire in her eyes. "I breathe freely there. Shut up in great towns I feel chained, imprisoned."

She spoke earnestly, almost passionately, while a crimson flush lighted up her beauty.

"I have seen little of your new world," he answered, "but I love it too. There is something so grand in these mighty forests—these vast rivers. Nature here spreads out on such a gigantic scale, that we wanderers from Europe are stunned with surprise. Was mademoiselle born here?"

"Quebec has always been my home," she replied.

He looked as if longing to ask a thousand questions which courtesy forbade him to form into words. Before he could speak again, Katharine, remembering her errand, made a movement to proceed.

"Are you going?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Next winter I return to Quebec," he said, "I shall think often of the happiness of meeting you again."

She cast one bewildering glance upon him, and, with a gesture of farewell hurried up the path. He stood watching her until she had disappeared in the windings of the forest, then he sprung down the bank, exclaiming, half aloud:

"Who can she be? What a beautiful creature! There is something terribly grand about her! Is she savage or civilized? I must hasten back—I promised to return before night-fall."

Still, the young man followed the island princess with his eyes and marked well the footpath she had taken.

Katharine hurried rapidly on toward the lodge, her mind filled with the recollection of that brief interview—fuller of gentler, more girlish thoughts than had blest it for months. This sudden love warmed and softened her whole nature like a tropical sun. Katharine felt the great change with wonder, and, in the depths of her soul, knew she had reached one of the important eras in her life. Thenceforth, dating from that meeting, there was to be a change—of what nature she could not tell—but it was to come, and the intuition to which she trusted never deceived her.

As she approached the door of the lodge, she saw her grandmother sitting upon the threshold. Near by stood a young Indian, conversing earnestly with her.

Katharine looked at him in surprise, for she had supposed herself familiar with the faces of all the leaders of her grandmother's tribe. This man was a stranger—evidently, in spite of his youth, a chief of considerable importance, from the sings which her practiced eyes detected in his dress.

Old Ahmo heard her step. Seeing Katharine approaching, she said a few words in a low tone to the chief, which made him turn toward the wild girl with the stately grace which characterizes an Indian warrior—a stateliness born of the woods.

"Mahaska has been long in coming," said the old woman, with a grave air of rebuke; "has she become so wedded to the pale-faces that she can not bear to leave them even for an hour?"

"Grandmother, you know that I can not every day leave the great town," she answered, the Indian accents sounding rich and sweet in her melodious voice; "but my heart is always here in my grandmother's lodge. My soul turns always to the tribe of my dead mother."

The old woman looked at her with all the affection that her hard face was capable of expressing.

"Mahaska is still a true bird of the forest," she said, triumphantly. "But her cheek is pale; she is killing herself with the books the pale-faces give her."

"Mahaska must be wise and full of guile as they are," she answered; "but she hates their knowledge as she does them."

"The old woman glanced at the young chief and made the gesture of approval.

"The maiden speaks like a prophet," he said; "the wisdom of the great chief Nemono has descended to his grandchild."

Katharine smiled down upon him from her lofty state with a grace that many a European princess might have envied.

"I do not know your face," she said; "I have never seen you in my grandmother's lodge before."

"Gi-en-gwa-tah has been upon the war-path," answered the old woman, "far away from here, and has taken many scalps; he is a great warrior."

Katharine looked at him with an admiration she had seldom felt for any man; the gay French officers about the Governor's castle only filled her with contempt by their light manners and frivolous amusements. Here was a man of power.

"I know the chief's name," she said; "it is feared among his enemies. I am glad to see him in my grandmother's lodge."

He made a stately gesture of courtesy, and through the bronze impassibility of his visage, one could see how the sight of her beauty touched his savage heart.

"The young princess speaks softly as a wood dove," he said, "but her eye is brave as that of an eagle, poised above the Falls."

"Mahaska shall one day be a great squaw," exclaimed the old woman; "she can teach her tribe wisdom which will make them equal to the pale-faces. The red blood of many chiefs burns in her cheeks. She will be a queen and a prophetess among her people."

"It is well," answered the chief; "the women of her nation shall grow wise by her example. If Nemono's grandchild will come among her people, she shall be great in their medicine-lodges."

"Some time, some time," answered Katharine, abruptly. "Mahaska has work to do here yet; she will stay among the pale faces till her soul has drank of their knowledge. Then she will know how to sit in council with great warriors."

"Does the maiden fear the forest with its dark paths, and the rude life that her people lead?" asked the chief, with a look of displeasure. "Is it fear that whispers her to wait?"

Katharine turned upon him haughtily.

"Let the chief choose his words with more care," she said. "Mahaska is a princess and will have respect."

He bent his head and his face cleared—the savage pride that flashed in her eyes pleased him.

"She speaks boldly, like a young chief," he said.

"She has the heart of one," answered the girl; "when Mahaska goes among her people, she will not be ranked with the women of her tribe. She will know how to reign."

The old woman nodded her head approvingly, and the young chief looked perplexed. This strange specimen of womanhood was as new to his experience as it had just proved to the French officer.

"When does the maiden mean to come among her mother's people? They are waiting," he said.

"I can not tell when; but if she does join her tribe, Mahaska will scorn them if they are not bold and daring as she will be.

"The chiefs will listen to her voice," he said; "she is wise beyond even the prophets of her nation."

In truth, among the whole of the Six Nations, Katharine's name was already held in respect. Ahmo had kept alive the interest concerning her, and there really was a vague superstition among the Indians that the Great Spirit had raised up this maiden to be a ruler among them and to teach them to combat successfully the encroachments of the pale-faces.

Suddenly Katharine burst forth in a torrent of impassioned eloquence which made the chief's eyes flash, and his face brighten with pride and wonder. She sent messages to the rulers of the tribes; she painted for them a future so noble that the young man was transfixed with astonishment.

"Tell the old men," she said, "that all these things shall be. Mahaska, day and night, thinks of her people—toils for them. She will keep her word. Soon they shall know her."

"The Manitou speaks through her lips," he said, with awe in his tone. "Gi-en-gwa-tah will remember her words and they shall be given to the chiefs."

"It is well," said Katharine. "Now let the chief talk freely with Mahaska; he must keep nothing back from her. She is sent by the Great Spirit—her people dare not refuse to hear her words."

This young girl spoke with the power of divination; the secret of her silent meditations broke forth. For a long time her mind had centered upon that object, to make for herself a vast power among the Indians. She had laid out no definite plan—she could not tell how or when she might go among them, but she determined to make herself respected and feared. To fill their souls with superstitious awe, that when the time came for her to take her place among her people, she might become their ruler and mold them so completely to her wishes that she would indeed be a queen, powerful as the female monarchs of the old world of whom she had read so much. She felt in her pride that her state should not fall below theirs, or her power be less. The Six Nations were a great people even then—great and worthy of a controlling mind like hers; France had proved their value as allies; other nations should hereafter learn of their greatness.

"Let the chief return to his people," she said, at last, "and repeat to them what Mahaska has said. The Great Spirit dictates the words that fall from her lips. Let the red-men cherish them in their hearts, and grow strong. Mahaska will want many warriors for the war-path.

"Gi-en-gwa-tah will remember," he said, "and the chiefs will act upon her words."

"The time has not yet come for Mahaska to go among them," she continued, "but ere the flowers have faded many autumns, she will go forth to join them and will never leave them again."

"The maiden's voice is soft as the sound of pleasant waters," he said; "but her words are loud like those of a great prophet; they will sink deep into the hearts of her people."

"Then the Great Spirit will send them plenty," she replied, "much corn and venison, better than that, many scalps. Their names shall be a terror to their enemies. Mahaska herself will lead them forth to battle, and those who follow her upon the war-path shall always return victors. She has promised!"

She overwhelmed the chief with her eloquence, and bewildered him with her beauty. He went back to his people full of the marvel he had seen, and filled every mind with new interest concerning their future chieftainess. Katharine returned to her home to indulge in her unwomanly dreams, and harden her heart still more with thoughts of coming power—power which should yet make the haughty whites tremble in their high places. If among them she was shunned and scorned, now it should be her revenge to make herself feared and obeyed when the time came for her triumph.

CHAPTER VII.

THE NEW STAR.

It was mid-winter in Quebec, and for the first time since the sudden death which had followed the arrival of the ill-fated wife of the Governor, the castle was thrown open to a scene of gayety and festive enjoyment. Adele had left the convent, and this party was given in her honor. It had been the talk of the whole town for weeks past, and people were rejoiced that the gubernatorial palace was once more about to assume the aspect which best suited their mercurial French nature.

It was difficult to tell what the Governor would have decided in regard to Katharine's appearance if he had been left to his own judgment, but Adele took the matter entirely into her own hands, and would as soon have remained hidden herself, as to have allowed her friend to be excluded from the festivities of which she was to prove the object.

Adele was in a state of great excitement during the whole day, as she was sure to be at the bare idea of any festivity, and nothing surprised her so much as the perfect coolness Katharine maintained upon the occasion.

"You provoking girl," she exclaimed, running into Katharine's chamber that afternoon for the twentieth time, and finding her en-

glossed in a book. "There you sit reading quietly, as if nothing uncommon were to take place; I am vexed with you, Kate, it's unnatural."

"If we are to have balls as frequently as people predict," replied Katharine, "one may as well learn to take them quietly."

"I can not," said Adele, "I really can not. I never was meant to be stately and proud like you—real princess that you are. I have been trying to sleep a little; but, dear me, I can already fancy the people whirling about in the ball-room, every time I close my eyes."

She was most endurable to Katherine during such childish displays, and it was a pleasant change to the intense hate which had eaten so deeply into her soul, binding it down to evil thoughts like a heavy fetter of iron. Still she sat immovable, looking on the page she had been reading.

"I don't believe you have looked at your dress," she said; "I have tried mine on a dozen times; how shall you dress your hair, Kate? With a coronet of braids, I hope."

The girl had just been dreaming her great visions of future power, and this butterfly intruded upon her with her petty weaknesses. Katharine actually smiled upon her as she laid down her book.

"What did you ask, little French rose?" she inquired.

"Ah, now I know you are very good natured at the bottom," said Adele, "you never call me that when you are out of sorts. Dear me, you look very grand to-day; but, your hair, *belle princesse*, how will you wear it? That was my question."

"As now," Katharine replied, touching the heavy braids that were plaited in a curious fashion about her head.

"I believe you are right," said Adele, "nothing could be more becoming to you—twist the red and black feathers in it, though."

"I shall: they have a significance which few understand. They are as much my right as the crown belongs to a European queen," she replied, "I am not ashamed to show your white guests the race to which I belong. You are white and the Count's favorite; I am a savage, let them understand that."

"How proud you are of your Indian blood," said Adele, "well, you are right."

Katharine forgot her presence; she was giving way again to her proud fancies, even then weaving vague plots for future self-aggrandizement, which in after years she actually hoped would be carried out to the letter, so tenacious and unforgetful was she of the least thing connected with her ambition.

"You will be superb in that crimson silk," said Adele, pointing to the rich dress that lay upon the bed; "I am glad I chose that for you."

Adele moved restlessly about the room in a subdued state of excitement, so uncommon with her, that Katharine felt that something more than the approaching ball was the cause, but she waited patiently, certain that if there was any secret, Adele would confide it to her before she left the room.

"We shall have a great many strangers to-night," Adele said; "one gentleman has arrived from Montreal."

"Who is he?" Katharine asked, carelessly.

"A Frenchman—he only lately arrived in New York—he comes to visit papa."

Katharine caught the added flush upon her face, but could not understand its import.

"What is his name?" she asked. "Do you know him?"

"Gaston de Laguy. I have never seen him—I shall have to go down presently. I know papa will send for me that he may present him."

Katharine wondered a little at the emotion Adele betrayed at the idea of meeting a man who was an entire stranger to her; but, setting it down as one of the childish follies she often had to despise in her, she gave small thought to the circumstance.

"You are bewitching to-day," she said, praising her as she always did when some innocent, child-like word or action on the girl's part excited her contempt. "You will win many hearts to-night."

"You never seem to think of your own beauty."

"I prefer to think of yours," she interrupted; "you are my little sunbeam, you know."

"Dear, dear Kate!" she whispered.

Katharine fondled her as she would have done a little dog, but what could the innocent creature dream of the scorn concealed in every caress, or how fiercely the long, slender fingers tingled to close about her beautiful throat and strangle her?

The savage was coming upon her so rapidly, that Katharine had to break the spell as she had been forced to do many times before, lest in one of the insane furies which often came over her, she should really strangle her lovely victim, and so by a single outburst deprive herself of the vengeance which she intended more fully to wreak upon her.

She managed to rid herself of her society at last, and went out upon a terrace to escape the confinement of the house which had become insupportable. While she stood there, heedless of the cold, she heard voices in the hall and shrank out of sight into a recess.

Some one had thrown up a window, and Katharine recognized the voice of one of the young officers attached to the Governor's person.

"That is a noble view, is it not, Gaston?"

"Very fine, but the air is dreadfully piercing to-day."

The voice which answered was one that Katharine recognized with a start—something in its tone struck her with a new emotion. She leaned forward so as to obtain a glimpse of his person without herself being seen, and beheld a tall, fine figure showing to advantage in his dashing uniform, and a face of such regular beauty, that it would have looked almost effeminate had it not been for the massive forehead and the determined, spirited expression of his features. It was the stranger she had met near her grandmother's lodge

"This ball will be a gay affair," said his companion. "You are fortunate, de Laguy, to have arrived from Montreal at this precise time."

"I am curious to see the Governor's fair daughter," he said, "she must be a lovely creature."

"Like a fairy, a sylph! But the other—the half Indian girl—she is beautiful, too—all fire, and proud as Lucifer, but superb!"

"Wonderfully beautiful, they tell me. I suppose she is known as ———"

"As *la belle Katharine*," returned the other warningly; "people do not speak of her parentage within these walls."

They both laughed, then the stranger said pityingly:

"Poor thing, poor thing!"

The window closed, and Katharine came out of her concealment pale as a ghost, her face looked sad and hardened by the passions to which these last words gave rise. She hurried to her room, barred the door against all intrusion, and gave way to the tempest of wrath that swept her soul like a tornado.

"Mahaska scorns the pale faces!" she muttered, in her Indian tongue. "Oh, my day shall come! Far and wide across the broad ocean, the name of the Indian white queen shall be known and feared! Were my people not so ignorant, I would lead them across the sea even, I would desolate every land that the white man owns, I would redden the ocean with their blood."

After a time her mood changed, she grew gay, girlish in her thoughts, she remembered the young stranger, and the pitying words he had spoken, and Katharine was all woman for once.

She recollected that Adele had spoken of him very often; he had come to Quebec to remain—a young French noble, who had left his native land for the sake of travel and adventure.

She would not receive any one in her room for the rest of the day. When night came and it was time to dress, she refused to admit either Adele or her maid.

It was almost time to go down stairs, when she threw open the door and allowed Adele to enter. The girl could not repress an exclamation of astonishment when she looked at her, and she had never dreamed of any thing so gorgeously beautiful as Katharine appeared.

Katharine was tall, above the ordinary height attained by persons of her age, and so full of majestic grace, that one impulsively rendered the homage she seemed to demand. She was regally perfect in form, but her great beauty lay in the rare harmony of a complexion rich and mellow as autumn fruit. The great black eyes burning with passionate fire, fairly lighted and seemed to ripen the dusky crimson of her cheeks and the scarlet of her lips. No civilization had yet been able to change the panther-like grace of her movements, which possessed all the greatness of conscious power.

In her heart love was a passion that sprung into vivid life instan-

taneously, as a spark thrown among dry prairie grass leaps into flame while it falls. The very sound of that stranger's voice had thrilled her with a womanly ambition to be beautiful in his eyes. Hitherto she had taken little heed to her dress, except to give it a dash of savage wildness; but now it became a subject of wonderful interest. She searched among the dresses that had been liberally provided for her, and, with marvelous taste, selected one of the antique brocades that make a perfect toilet in themselves. The groundwork was of crimson, overrun by a sumptuous pattern that seemed like black lace flashing down it in festoons, gathered up by bouquets of gorgeous flowers, which overrun the whole dress, and seemed absolutely to bloom out from the rich fabric.

Fine yellow lace, and many a knot of ribbon, accompanied this dress, but Katharine tossed them carelessly aside. She found also a head-dress, which might have obscured the purplish brightness of her hair, but she cast that aside with the lace, cast a quick glance through the window, and flung the sash open.

A clump of forest trees were rooted in the terrace upon which the castle stood. Their branches swept the window of Katharine's chamber, and a thrifty vine, just touched by the frost, clung around the frame-work, chasing some of the boughs closer to the wall in its climbing. Katharine gathered handfuls of leaves from both vine and branches; some of these leaves were red, mottled with gold; others green-edged, with vivid crimson; others still burned with a bright flame color, and these were followed by some of a deep maroon tint, veined with black. As Katharine dragged the branch toward her, and gathered in these variously tinted leaves, she wove them into a chaplet, putting the heaviest mass of colors in front. Then, with a single twist of the hand, she wove it among her braids, and was crowned, a lady that might have adorned any court of Europe, and yet a forest Queen. Thus Katharine stood before Adele, who came flushing into the room in a summer cloud of blue silk, shimmering with a silvery glow under soft, frosty lace—curls broken up in a spray of amber hair, in which the light turned golden, and cheeks like apple-blossoms, made her whole appearance one perfect harmony. A more lovely contrast to the proud, dark creature that stood before her in the midst of that sylvan chamber, never existed.

"Oh! my Princess! my Queen! how beautiful you are? Now that you smile, who could resist you?"

"Am I, so very beautiful?" said Katharine, and the peachy glow deepened in her cheek. "Tell me, Adele, am I really what men of your race admire?"

"Indeed, indeed, you are what men of my race adore, my bright Katharine," cried Adele, clasping her dimpled hands in the ecstasy of admiration. "Why, what has come over you? Those leaves crown you like an imperial diadem. You look born to command."

"I am born to command," she paused an instant, and then, with a disdainful curve of the lip, added—"Savages."

"No, no, Katharine, it is in the saloons, that you must reign. Fling off all thought of savage life to night, or you will lose that lovely smile, and people will be afraid of you."

"Afraid of me! Well, what then?"

"Why then they will not love you."

"Love me—love me—me?"

It seemed a new thought to her. She had thirsted for power, for revenge; but love—could that really ever be hers?

A servant entered and addressed Adele:

"The Governor has sent for you, Mademoiselle."

"Come down, Katharine," she said, "the guests are beginning to arrive."

"It is not for me to receive them," she replied; "go yourself. I will come presently."

Adele saw that she was in one of her unyielding humors, and left her without urging her further, fearing that she might grow obstinate, and not appear at all.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CONFESSIONAL.

KATHARINE returned to her room and remained there for a time. She had no timidity in regard to society; she simply wished to be late in entering the rooms, that she might attract universal attention, as she was well aware she would do, and thereby trouble the Governor's composure.

There were many beautiful women in the great saloons—ladies of high birth, bred at courts—but not one crossed the floor with the dignity and grace of the haughty Indian, as she glided toward the Governor, where he stood with Adele, her rich costume and exceeding beauty showing to its fullest advantage, as she passed under the blaze of the numberless chandeliers, which flooded the saloons with light.

A universal and involuntary murmur of admiration followed her. Adele looked perfectly happy as she witnessed this. The Governor's brow clouded for an instant; but he recovered himself at once, and took Katharine's hand.

"You should not have been so late" was all the reproof he gave and Katharine's blood was on fire at the words, and the flash of her eyes was resplendent. Anger only added to her beauty. He presented her to several of the guests standing near:

"My god daughter—Mademoiselle Katherine."

The wild girl fairly divided the honors with Adele, for so many sur

mises and stories concerning her parentage had gone abroad, that people were wild to know her. Added to that, her great beauty, and the tales that were told of her feats of reckless daring, made her an object of particular attention.

She talked freely, but not as other women conversed; there was a savage looseness running through her mode of speech, although her French was elegant, and her manners polished as those of the most noble lady in the rooms.

She refused to dance; she had an utter contempt for the languid movements of the saloon but, in every other respect, she was grace and courtesy itself; although she received all the homage offered her as if it had been her right, and indeed no queen could have requited it more gracefully.

She had been conversing with an old General of great celebrity, who was perfectly charmed with her originality, when, on looking round, she saw Adele gliding through the mazes of a now obsolete dance; her partner was the young stranger whom she had seen on the Island.

She watched them long, and the iron entered her soul as she looked. He was the only man who did not approach her; the evening was almost over before he was presented. But he seemed for a time almost as much under the spell of her wonderful eyes as the men for whose admiration she had taken no heed.

"You must not pay me compliments," she said, with her graceful abruptness; "save those for my little friend Adele. Tell me how the ocean looks in a storm—I have been thinking of it all day."

Finished man of the world as he was, De Laguy was fairly taken aback by her singularity; but she went on talking as she alone could do, flinging down upon him her lightning glances, and fairly dazzling him with the glory of her smiles.

After a time he left her, surrounded by a group of listeners, and found his way back to Adele. Katharine's eyes were watching him.

"Will he love her?" she thought; "will she take *that* from me too? She is drawing the net about herself—I can see the darkness coming nearer every day."

Katharine disappeared before the guests had all retired, and when Adele went up to her room she found her sitting upon the couch of furs that served her as a bed, in her favorite attitude, idly twisting upon her fingers a string of gems which the Governor had presented her on the occasion of the ball, but which she had left on the table in her room.

"Has it not been delightful?" cried Adele, flinging herself down on the couch, her cheeks crimson with excitement, and her eyes fairly purple. "It was like a fairy fete, was it not, Katharine?"

"Very beautiful," she answered; "very."

"I shall not sleep to-night," said Adele; "my head whirls yet with the dancing."

"Poor little head!" returned Katharine, "it would be better off on its pillow."

"No, no ! I want to talk to you, Kate—you are not sleepy ?"

"Not in the least; but I should think you would be tired of talking."

"Oh, I am never that, you know," Adele said, laughing gayly; "papa calls me a mocking-bird, you know, such as they have in the Southern colonies—they sing night and day."

Katharine moved restlessly—any allusion to her father's fondness for the girl always excited her.

"Were you pleased to-night?" Adele asked.

"Oh, yes. I liked best of all to watch you, you looked so happy."

"Dear, kind, Katharine!" she exclaimed, "I believe you never think of yourself."

In the gloom Katharine smiled—her dangerous, subtle smile. Nothing pleased her more than the complete ignorance of every one concerning her character. She had a fierce pride in thinking that none of those who surrounded her could fathom her mind, or judge differently of her than she chose to allow.

Adele had sunk into thought; she took the necklace from Katharine's hand, and began twining it about her wrist like a bracelet; all the while her color came and went, and her eyes grew misty and soft.

Katharine had begun to watch her after her usual crafty fashion; she saw the unwonted trouble in her clear face now, and she saw, too, that the emotions which caused it were not unpleasant ones.

"What did you wish to tell me?" she asked.

Adele blushed deeply, and turned away her head, as if the great fire, near which they were lying, annoyed her.

"I only said that I wished to talk to you."

"I know it; but you have something to tell. Your face is like a mirror, where one can see at will."

Adele was silent for a few moments; then, with an effort which sent new crimson to her cheeks, she said:

"Did you notice the young stranger?"

"You mean Gaston de Laguy?"

Adele bowed assent; she could not speak just then. Katharine raised herself on the furs; a sort of oppression was in her heart—she could not breathe freely.

"I have meant to tell you for weeks past, Katharine," she said "but it is not an easy subject to talk of. My father told me that he was coming; his family was once allied to mine in France. His uncle sent letters in advance. They wish for—for another alliance but my father would give no definite answer until I had seen him."

The girl had dealt the last and cruelest blow of all; but Katharine could still hide the sudden anguish that smote all her strength away.

A strange picture, which passed like a flash of lightning before her eyes, swept before her.

She seemed to be standing in a forest, surrounded by the chiefs of her nation—she heard the shouts of the savages—she saw the death-fires kindled, and that girl Adele, crouching by her side, was the victim.

"It is a prophecy," she muttered, pressing her hands before her eyes. Chileli sent it to her child."

"What do you say, Katharine?" asked Adele, rousing herself. Katharine called back all her calmness and dissimulation.

"You have taken my breath," she answered; "I say nothing."

"He is very handsome, Kate, is he not?"

"For your sake I will look more closely at him. You will certainly marry him—you love him already."

She bent over the girl, and looked down into her face, until the gentle creature shrunk from her fiery eyes.

"Nay, this sounds unwomanly," she said; "I have seen him but once."

"Is love a work of time?" demanded Katharine, passionately.

"I tell you it compresses a hundred years into a moment!"

She spoke with a wild recklessness that fascinated Adele. The dewy look came back to her eyes—the heavenly smile to her mouth.

"It is very sweet," she murmured, "very sweet." Katharine's lynx ears caught the words.

"Death will be so much the harder," she muttered to herself; "revenge so much the better worth having. My mother's spirit has spoken—I will obey."

Adele heard no echo of the words; her heart was full of the sweet music which had wakened in its depths, and no perception of the evil that throbbed in the bosom of her companion cast a single warning tone over its melody.

"So many times I have longed to speak to you of this," murmured Adele, after a pause, which Katharine had not attempted to break, "but the words never would come to my lips."

"Were you afraid of me?" she asked.

"Not that; you understand? Don't laugh at me, Kate."

"I am not laughing, child."

"You know what I mean," continued Adele; "it is so difficult to talk of a thing that—I was frightened always when my father alluded to it."

"You will have no fear now."

"It is different, Kate, now I have seen him," she whispered; "but then, it sounded almost unwomanly to talk even to you of a man whom I did not know."

Katharine did not speak; she was watching her always, leaning back with her eyes half closed, till it seemed as if sparks of fire broke through the long lashes.

"You do not speak, Kate; you wish me neither joy or happiness; are you not pleased?"

"It comes upon me so suddenly; how could I dream of a thing like this?"

"I know—I know; you have always seemed to think me almost a child."

"Not that—but I did not expect a revelation like this."

She stopped a moment; a question was on her lips, but she feared to trust herself with it, lest her will should betray the mingled feelings at her breast. Adele went on with her own thoughts, and, as if Katharine had exercised some singular magnetic influence upon her which impelled her to answer the question which had trembled upon Katharine's lips as if it had been really spoken.

"And he—de Laguy—he was so kind, so gentle; I had no fear after the first few moments."

"He loves you, then," she exclaimed, quickly; "he told you so!"

Adele bowed her head still lower, and the crimson rushed in flood up to her very forehead.

"He told me that he had dreamed of this day for years," she whispered, emotion making her voice sweet as the notes of an *Æolian* harp; "that, in the splendor of the court or the excitement of battle, he never forgot. He had seen me once; I was a child, and he was very young. But he says that my face has hardly changed—he would have known me at the first glance."

Emboldened by her own revelations, Adele went on freely, now that the first embarrassment of speaking was past, and Katharine lay back among her furs, like some wild animal crouching in its lair. When the young girl at last bade her good night, she watched her disappear, whispering to herself again:

"Revenge will be so much the better. My mother's spirit has spoken!"

Never once during those years had Katharine's mind wavered from the Indian faith, taught by her grandmother. She had obeyed the religious observances at the convent, as she would have complied with any other course of study, but had given them no further thought.

Of course, education had robbed her of many of the superstitions to which her grandmother had taught her to cling; but she rejected nothing that her acute judgment would allow her to retain, and it was wonderful in a woman of her intellect, to see how tenaciously she kept hold of every dark and narrow creed that she was able to force upon her mind.

CHAPTER IX.

MAHASKA'S RESOLVE.

SPRING had come. The woods had gained their mantle of tender green; the early flowers were out, making beautiful the wild paths of the forest, and the air was balmy and soft.

Life at the castle went pleasantly on to all outward appearance. To Adele and Gaston the days passed like a season in paradise.

The Governor was content in his child's happiness it was all he asked for now. As far as his own aspirations and aims went, existence was at an end; but it was like retracing a passage in his youth to watch their bliss. The remembrances brought up were painful sometimes, but full of a sweet melancholy, which possessed an inexpressible charm.

The marriage between Adele and Gaston de Laguy had been for some time past a settled thing; early in the summer was the time at last named.

Fetes and amusements of all sorts were daily occurrences, and Katharine was always to be found among the young and joyous, for Adele would not hear of her absenting herself. Indeed, she had become the object of such general admiration, that no party of pleasure would have been considered complete without the Indian maid's presence. Her mixed blood did not seem to prejudice society against her as the Governor had feared it would, and he began to hope that she might even turn the affection of some nobleman, who would take her far away from all contact with her old life.

There had been so much gaiety since the two girls left the convent that he had seen little of Katharine alone, and as far as acquaintance with her real character was concerned, he was as ignorant as if he had been an entire stranger.

He was no longer troubled by her idolatrous love or her fits of insane passion, and gradually the estrangement his heart had felt toward her was wearing off. She seemed perfectly content that his affection should be lavished upon Adele. There was not the slightest sign of jealousy; she treated her companion like a lovely child, who was to be petted and spoiled to the fullest extent.

But the tempest in her heart was every day growing more violent; surging up with a fury which threatened to break its bonds in spite of the iron self-control with which she had so long bound it down. It was a singular thing, but the only person in whom she excited distrust, was the man for whose love she would have sold her very soul. De Laguy never spoke of this distrust; it was a vague sentiment which he hardly acknowledged to himself, but he could not drive it away. In spite of her gorgeous beauty, her winning manners, she always reminded him of a rattlesnake, coiled and ready to spring.

He would not have pained Adele for the world by admitting that feeling; but it grew stronger every day; if lulled to rest by the magic of Katherine's wonderful powers of conversation, it was only that it might spring up more strongly the instant the spell was removed. He tried to combat it but in vain; had he been wise, he would have avoided her very presence, certain that the unaccountable mistrust in his mind was at least a sign that the incompatibility of their character would render any thing like friendship between them impossible. As it was, he frequently found himself under the influence of charms that would have turned the bosom of any man whose heart was disengaged.

Under the influence of her great happiness, Adele had blossomed into new beauty. To Gaston she looked scarcely human, with her transparent complexion and clear blue eyes, which from childhood had never reflected a thought that was not pure and holy.

Even the melancholy of the Governor softened daily at the sight of that beaming face, and it was now almost definitely arranged that after her marriage he should resign his position and return with the wedded pair to France.

Katherine went on smooth and impenetrable as ever. If possible, her beauty every day increased, but her face grew more haughty, and except when it was necessary to serve her purpose, her smiles less and less frequent.

In secret she visited her grandmother frequently, and, while in the forest, her conduct was so strange, that had any one chanced to have seen her, the reputation she acquired for singularity would have increased.

She practiced shooting with bows and arrows, and with a rifle, till her aim was as deadly as that of any chief of her tribe. She could fling a tomahawk with the most unerring precision, row a boat, or undertake the most arduous expeditions without evincing the slightest fatigue, but no one save the old Indian woman was ever the witness of any of those wild exercises. With that sort of prophetic instinct of which we have before spoken, and which the woman seemed really to possess all through her terrible life, Katherine felt the consummation of her own plans narrowing about her every day, and she bent all her powers to the task, determined to regulate *even Destiny itself*.

But with all her boldness, her masculine range of thought, the strange creature could not conquer her one human weakness; she loved Gaston de Laguy, and in her nature, that love was terrible, almost as hate itself.

In *that* feeling she could have no confidence. Her hatred and desire for revenge she could share with her granddame, but her affection for the pale face had to be carefully hidden from the old Indian woman, whose hatred for the whites seemed to increase with her age. Katharine had suffered horribly during the past weeks; only her strong will supported her. Another woman must have sunk under a tithe of the suffering which she endured.

She did not dream of de Laguy's feelings toward her. She saw that he loved Adele, but she had so thoroughly all her life worked out *her own will*, that she could not believe in the possibility of being thwarted in this, the most powerful feeling of her whole nature.

Day by day she meditated the plot which must separate them. When the moment arrived, she would spring unexpectedly as the serpent, to which he mentally compared her, and the poison of her sting would be far more deadly.

No perceptions of her plans dawned upon any human being. Even her grandmother did not dream of her love for the young French

man. Katherine understood well the opposition she should meet from her, but she meant to carry out her designs in defiance of every human opposition.

She saw de Laguy was an ambitious man. The thought of ruling over vast savage nations, instructing them in all the arts of civilization which could make them the rivals of the whites in power, had so long been her favorite dream, nay, more than that, her *purpose* for the future, that she could not understand the idea of any one regarding it with abhorrence, or looking upon it as any thing but a heritage of sovereignty.

To share in her *gaudeur* and these triumphs, was the part she awarded to Gaston de Laguy in her visions, and she believed that when the time came to reveal them to him, his affection for Adele would yield before the glorious power which she could bestow upon him with her love.

She had not forgotten the anger of the Indians which would ensue, but she believed that she could impress upon them that such was the will of the Great Spirit, and they would submit. In short, her powerful will had seized upon the project which her heart had pointed out, and she was determined to fulfil it.

Katharine was sitting alone in her chamber that spring day, not even with a book in her hand, only brooding over her dark thoughts, and nursing them into stern determination. She heard Adele's voice in the corridor singing a French song, broken abruptly as she reached the door.

"Is the princess visible?" she called merrily, half opening the door.

"Come in," Katharine said, "do not stand on ceremony with me."

"I have been hunting the castle over for you," she exclaimed, "somebody said they saw you go down in the courtyard, but here you are immured in your own enchanted chamber."

"Did you need me?"

"Only your society, fair lady; can that be accorded?"

"If you have time to accept it."

"Then I shall sit down," returned Adele; "Papa has closeted himself with Gaston, and I was quite lost when I could not find you."

"Is there not some sort of a fete to-night?" Katharine asked.

"What a girl to forget! — Certainly there is; but only a small one. I hope it will be pleasant."

"You will not have much longer to endure the tedium of this dull town," said Katharine.

"Not much longer," replied Adele; "but I have been very happy here."

"Is it decided when you sail?"

"In June," and Adele's face was divided between a smile, and a startled shyness. "I think my father will go with us."

"You will be very happy," said Katharine; "you will live in Paris, and you love gayety so much."

"You will see as much of it as I," said Adele; "you always speak as if you were to be left behind."

"I have never heard the question of my going discussed."

"Because it is a settled thing; what nonsense!"

"Do they think I am a dog!" thought Katharine, "to be dragged hither and thither as they will?"

But she made no answer, and Adele ran on with her pleasant fancies and hopes, and Katherine listened while all the time her passion rose in a mad whirl, and every nerve was strung to its utmost tension to preserve her calmness.

Adele left the room at last, and Katharine was alone. It was still some time before night-fall. She wrapped herself in a cloak and turned to leave the chamber, not even waiting as another woman would have done, to give vent to the fury which really mastered her.

She left the castle by one of the unused staircases, and took her way down to the river. Before the sunset came on she moved her canoe on the bank of the island, and took her way toward her grandmother's lodge. She had no certain knowledge that the old woman was there. Indeed, Ahmo seldom remained more than a week on the island, and never saw a white person. Her object in visiting the lonely spot, uninhabited always, save by herself, was to unite Katherine (or Mahaska as the young girl was known to the tribes) more closely to the people for whom it was the Governor's object to sunder her completely.

Frontenac, absorbed by a sorrow which never left him entirely, had no suspicion of the old woman's presence in the neighborhood, nor dreamed that night after night her lodge was the rendezvous of many a warrior chief, who crept from the forest down the side of the falls, and creeping to the island, built their council-fires beneath the shade of its giant trees.

As Katherine approached the lodge she could see through the wolf's hide, looped back from the door, her grandmother sitting at the further end of the room in her usual attitude, so still and motionless that there seemed no vitality left in the withered frame and relaxed limbs. As the girl's light step smote the threshold, the woman lifted her black eyes full of fire and evil thoughts, which gleamed out with a startling brilliancy from the wrinkled face.

Katherine was in the very heat of her passion and excitement; her appearance revealed the whirl and contention in her mind. She was very pale, but her eyes wore a dangerous look, and her mouth had settled into its hardest, most determined expression.

The old woman understood the signs, although she could not conceive the cause of her excitement. Katherine had carefully concealed from her grandmother the love-dream which became the crowning vision in her heart. All her ambitious plans regarding the reign

over the tribes were fully known, and had been carefully fostered by the woman. Month by month the chief's widow had held communication with the Indians, and spent most of her time in making long and arduous journeys among the Six Nations, to increase the interest concerning Katherine, which had grown so strong that the chiefs began to murmur at the delay she made in taking her rightful place among them.

Katherine did not pause at the threshold; the tempest in her soul must out at once. It had been so long hoarded there that every fibre of her being was racked beyond the power of endurance.

"Mahaska comes at last, like a young bird returning to its nest," said the old woman, before she could speak, eyeing her keenly all the while, and trying to decipher the strange language written on her face.

"Mahaska wishes to talk with her mother's mother," replied Katherine, standing directly up before the old woman, and fixing her burning eyes full upon her face.

"Let the maiden speak; the chief's widow will listen," returned she, suspecting some evil tidings, but awaiting with all outward composure. "There were sad voices crying in these old ears all last night; what has befallen the maiden?"

Katherine burst at once into rapid speech, hoping to carry her grandmother so completely along on the tide of her eloquence that the disclosures she had to make would strike with less repellant force upon her mind.

"Mahaska is the last of a long line of great chiefs," she began, in a sonorous Indian dialect; "from her birth she was chosen by the Great Spirit to work out a mighty destiny for her people. Chieftess of her mother, lived only to bring her into the world for this end—suffered and died that it might be accomplished. Nemono's widow knows this—the tribes believe it as a part of their religion!"

The woman bent her head, and signed her to continue.

"Mahaska has had new warnings, new visions," Katherine went rapidly on. "The Indians need the craft and wisdom of the whites. Mahaska is too young to rule entirely alone; there is no chief of the Nations fit to stand by her side in the united sovereignty."

The woman started somewhat from her stony calm, perplexed and troubled, but yet unable to take in the full import of the girl's words.

"It was the will of the prophet that a chief should share Mahaska's greatness," she said; but Katherine motioned her into silence with an imperious gesture.

"It can never be," she said; "the Great Spirit would be angry."

The old woman half rose to her feet, while a look of fierce horror passed over her face; but, at another sign from Katherine, she sunk back in her former position, listening in silence.

"There is at the castle a young pale-face, who is already a great brave among the whites. He loves the red-man; he is just and wise. Mahaska must be his wife; he must help her rule the Six Nations."

At these words the woman sprang to her feet with a shrill cry. Her features convulsed with emotion; her eyes seemed fairly burning with fire; her lean arm was extended, and her hand shook menacingly at the girl.

"The evil spirit has spoken to Mahaska!" she exclaimed. "Let her close her ears, or she will bring ruin upon herself and disgrace on the name of her forefathers."

Katharine only deepened the haughty fire of her glance.

"Mahaska sees clearly," she answered; "the thing of which she speaks must surely happen."

"Never, never!" groaned the woman. "The tribe would not consent; they would tear out the heart of the pale-face, and give it as a choice morsel to the chief who wedded Mahaska on his wedding day."

"No chief of the Six Nations will wed Mahaska," replied she.

"They will have it so—it has been decreed."

The girl's eyes flashed more fiercely.

"What power have they over Mahaska?" she cried. "How dare they make terms to her?"

"Mahaska belongs to them—she is of their people."

"Mahaska was sent by the Great Spirit; neither the pale-faces or the red-man can rule her. She must be free; she must govern others. The Manitou has spoken—it shall be so!"

The sun had gone down in a bed of gorgeous clouds; the rich light had begun to fade, and a chill grey settled over the landscape. In the lodge it was already dark, and in the room the two women stood, like some youthful queen and a withered sybil holding weird consultation.

"Mahaska mistakes the voice of her own heart for that of the Great Spirit," returned Ahmo. "This thing can *never* be; Mahaska can bring no pale-face to rule among her people—*never*?"

"Then Mahaska will never join them!" she exclaimed. "Let them live and die in their ignorance—Mahaska's anger shall blight them! The white men shall drive them out of their wigwams and their hunting-grounds; sickness and famine shall come upon them—they shall become weak slaves of the pale-faces, or creep away like wild beasts, to burrow in the dens and covers of the forest."

She spoke with the fire and passion of a prophetess of old. The woman trembled as she listened; but the shock of hearing that her grand-child was willing to wed one of the hated race had leadened her senses to any other evil.

"Has Mahaska forgotten how another fills her place in her father's lodge?" she exclaimed.

"Mahaska never forgets! She will have vengeance upon the pale-faces; but she needs help to carry out her plans. The white chief can give it—he has great wisdom. His counsels will teach the red-man how to force the pale-faces out of their land forever."

The old woman shook her head mournfully.

"Mahaska loves the pale-face," she said, in a voice divided between sorrow and scorn.

The rich color shot over Katharine's cheek; her head drooped—a soft smile crept to her lips. For an instant she was womanly again.

"Mahaska is no Indian now," continued the woman, with withering contempt; "the white blood has curdled the savage currents at her heart—she is not fit to be the ruler of nations. Let her sit down in her wigwam and weave wampum."

The girl started forward with insane fury. For an instant it seemed as if she would have pulled the withered crone to the earth; but she checked the mad impulse, and replied:

"Mahaska will be the greatest sovereign ever known; she will make her people very powerful, but they must heed her voice."

"They will not permit her to bring a pale face into their councils."

"Then Mahaska will not go," she cried. "Tell them so; Mahaska casts them off forever! They need not look for her coming; but when the storm gathers, and they know that the Manitou is angry with them, let them remember Mahaska and tremble."

She made a movement as if she would rush from the lodge; but the old woman caught her mantle in her shaking grasp.

"Mahaska will not leave her grandame," she pleaded, no longer daring to exhibit either anger or scorn.

"Then let her grandmother lend herself to the plans of the princess," returned Katharine, shaking off her hold. "Let her go among the Nations, and reveal the will of the Great Spirit."

"They will not listen. The old woman's voice is feeble; the chiefs will laugh her to scorn."

"Give them Mahaska's message; let them laugh at her if they dare!" she cried, in her insane pride.

"Let Mahaska consider! This is the last dream of her girlhood; let her throw it aside—she will be all Indian then!"

"Never!" she exclaimed. "It is destiny—the Manitou wills it. Where Mahaska wills the young white brave reigns also. Mahaska has spoken!"

The old woman lost all her fortitude; she pleaded—she reviled. But Katharine stood impassible; the storm could not turn her from her purpose.

"Send to the chiefs," she said, coldly, breaking in on the old woman's impassioned speech; "tell them Mahaska's resolve—let them decide. Bid them beware how they hesitate; Mahaska will not be buffeted to and fro like a squaw of burthen. If they will welcome her and the white chief, Mahaska will go among them at once; if not, they shall never see her face—shall feel only her curse."

The old woman sunk upon the ground, and buried her face in her robe, her frame bowing to and fro like a blasted tree shaking in the winter wind. Katharine looked at her, unmoved by her distress, determined to carry out her plans to the letter.

"Will Ahmo make known the will of Mahaska?" she demanded. "Let her speak."

The woman made a repellant gesture, but did not uncover her face.

"Then let the chief's widow bid her grandchild farewell forever," exclaimed Katharine; "she shall not meet her either here or in the happy hunting grounds."

The woman sprang up and caught at her dress again, with a cry of anguish; but Katharine wrenched it from her grasp.

"Decide!" she repeated.

The old woman had all her life been accustomed to power; the tribes had paid her the utmost respect. Her daughter, Chilel, she had ruled imperiously, even after she came to the Governor's castle, but before the will of that terrible girl she was without strength.

"Ahmo will do her grandchild's bidding," she answered, in a broken voice; "but she must sing her own death-song after. Nemono's widow will die."

"She will live to see Mahaska a great queen, and her people a mighty nation," replied Katharine arrogantly.

The old woman shook her head; an expression of absolute despair had taken the place of the hardness and craft which her face had before worn.

"The Nations will not consent," she said; "Mahaska has not power enough to carry out her wishes."

"She has! she will do it! Speak firmly to them; tell them what terrible curses await the tribes if Mahaska refuses to join them, and the only terms upon which she will come!"

"The old woman understands," she replied, slowly.

"Send for the leading chiefs—Mahaska will speak herself."

"Nemono's widow will go among the Nations," she answered; "she must listen to their councils."

"So be it," returned Katharine. "Remember Mahaska's words; her will must be obeyed, or she deserts them forever!"

The old woman shuddered anew at these words.

"Mahaska is mad!" she exclaimed. "She is blind!"

"Mahaska has eyes like a she-eagle, and she is inspired by the Great Spirit," returned the girl.

The old woman spoke no more; she submitted to her fate in passive despair.

"Mahaska must go back," replied Katharine; "to-morrow she will be here again—wait for her coming."

She turned and went out of the lodge; but the woman took no heed of her departure.

Katharine had thrown off forever the appearance of submission with which she had usually treated her grandmother; henceforth, like all about her, she too must be her slave. The girl's spirit sprang rapidly toward the absolute sovereignty of which she dreamed. The night came down—still the old woman sat there, silent and immovable, save when a sudden spasms of pain shook her in every limb, and passing left her rigid and stony as before.

CHAPTER X.

MAHASKA SPURNED

KATHARINE hurried down the bank, sprang into her canoe and rowed swiftly down the river. The moon was just coming up behind a pile of pearly clouds; the stars looked down upon her with their pure radiance; the wind among the forest trees whispered dreamily along the shore; but, she heeded nothing of the beauty around. Her mind was completely absorbed in the projects so long contemplated.

That very night Gaston de Laguy must learn the mighty future which awaited him. The first blow at Adele's life would be struck.

She reached the castle and escaped to her room unobserved. She dressed herself with unusual care and went down, resplendent with hope and conscious loveliness.

In passing through the grand saloon she looked at herself in the mirror; a thrill of womanly vanity shot up over the wild thoughts that were making riot in her heart. He could never withstand the power of that face; he would yield to her passionate love; her destiny would be complete in love, revenge and power, all hers!

She passed rapidly into a smaller saloon, where she was immediately surrounded by a gay crowd. She was forced to conquer her agitation and appear at ease, though, as the moments swept by, her very heart seemed bursting with expectation; she grew faint with a new-born fear that this man for whom she would have died might, after all, turn from all she had to offer him.

She broke away and wandered about the saloons, unable to be at rest for an instant; the fire which had been so long burning at her heart was at its height; it was all she could do to keep from giving way to the insanity which was upon her. She could not turn her eyes from Adele and Gaston as they danced or sang together, or sought every occasion, as the gay will, to exchange a word or a glance, when they believed themselves unobserved by those around.

After a time Adele was so occupied with her duties as hostess that the young man could not get near her. He wandered out of the saloons down into a flower garden that was already hastening into blossom, on the terrace. The moonlight lay rich and beautiful upon the greensward and fragrant flowers, shadows from the grim old castle falling here and there across them, dashed with the silver rain of the moonbeams, that seemed striving to wash out their gloom.

It was a lovely spot, quiet as a corner of Paradise. Katharine had watched him depart and, seeking her opportunity, she too left the house and gained the garden by an opposite path to the one which he had taken.

Gaston was walking slowly along, meditating upon the happiness so soon to be his, when, in a sudden turn of the walk, he came upon Katharine.

She did not appear to heed his approach, she was leaning against a stone pillar set up to support a vase that held some plant whose broad green leaves cast their shadow at her feet. The moonlight fell full upon her face and rich garments, as she stood there like some beautiful statue. Never had Gaston been more struck with her beauty. He could see how tumultuously the red in her cheek came and went, but the repulsion which he had always felt toward her increased as he gazed. He could not have told why, but he had vague dread of the girl—he never saw Adele caress her without longing to pull her away with the horror he would have felt if he had seen her thrust herself near a panther.

Even then, beautiful as she was, he would have turned and walked away if he could have done so unperceived, but while he was wondering if it could be possible, Katharine looked up, her eyes gleaming with an unearthly expression in the moonlight.

“Are you not afraid of the night air?” he asked coldly.

“You forget that I belong of right to the forest,” she replied; “I do not need so much tending as your pale lilies.”

Her voice was so soft and full of music that it interested Gaston in spite of himself—when she chose, it had cadences which no mortal could have resisted.

“You ought to see one of our American forests by moonlight,” she went on, fully conscious of the effect which her voice was having upon him, “it would be worth a voyage across the great sea.” She hurried on with a vivid description of scenes that she had witnessed and, carried away by her own eloquence, spoke with a poetry and power he had never heard equaled.

“How much you love the wild woods,” he said, wonderingly, when she had finished.

“And so would you,” she answered; “you are not gay and frivolous like the other men who crowd this castle—you have a soul that ought to lead you to great triumphs. The woman who loves you should be able to understand your dreams and hopes—to stand side by side with you in trouble or danger, she should be your mate.”

He started a little, but Katherine was so eager in her wild words that she did not heed it.

“I fear my little Adele could hardly do that,” he answered, “I do not think she is either daring or ambitious.”

That name brought into the conversation irritated Katharine—she frowned black as midnight.

“But your wife should be both,” she exclaimed quickly.

“Thanks,” he said laughing; “but, I think Mademoiselle mistakes my character.”

“Could you not love an ambitious woman?” she asked, with her great earnest eyes full upon his face.

"Nay, not having tried I am poorly prepared to answer your question," he returned, in the same trifling tone, which she was too much excited to observe, as she would have done at another time.

"If a woman like the one I describe did love you," she hurried on, "if you knew it—felt it—would not your heart turn toward her with a passion that it had never yet experienced?"

"I love already," he said, "there could be no room in my breast for any other feeling—my betrothed wife fills it thoroughly."

"Love!" repeated Katharine; "you do not yet know the meaning of the word. No pale, weak girl, like Adele, could inspire it in your heart. You mistake friendship for affection; the feeling such as one has toward a helpless child, for the grand, glorious passion, love." Her face glowed, her eyes seeming to dart scintillations of flame upon the young man. "Love hurts, love burns, love will have all or nothing; every breath, every thought—no, no, you do not yet know what it is to love. It is a thing born of the wilderness; it belongs to freedom, yet grasps at power; this is the love I am talking of."

Many men would have been bewildered and entranced by that splendid creature, as she hurried on in her passion, but Gaston de Laguy had a soul almost womanish in its purity; he had been taught to love Adele almost from boyhood, and now there was no possibility of a shadow of change in his feelings; besides that, as he looked at Katharine the old repulsion came up stronger than ever, though he was too free from masculine vanity to think whither her conversation was leading.

She mistook his silence, astute and keen as she was in her perceptions; for the only time in her life her heart was blinded by her judgment. She believed her spell had begun to work. She believed that Gaston was overwhelmed by the fascination of her looks and language.

"Do you remember the first time we met?" she almost whispered, in a tone so rich and full of music that it would have been irresistible to almost any human being; but Gaston's antipathy was so strong that he fairly shuddered, fancying that he could hear a serpent hiss under the soft tones." Do you remember our meeting? Katharine has never forgotten it; she had a proud vision then of the future—that vision was a prophecy. Before us two is greatness and dominion—the sovereignty which kings boast of."

In her excitement she unconsciously framed her sentences in the manner she used when speaking her Indian dialect. Slight as the thing was, it affected her listener unpleasantly.

"What was this vision?" he asked, quietly.

Katharine turned her eyes full upon him—those beautiful eyes that seemed wet with dew and kindled with starlight—but her glance fell powerless upon the honest heart she would have died to win.

"I am a princess among the red-men," she continued, rapidly—"the hour that I consent to go among them I shall become a sover

eign as powerful as your own haughty monarch of France; my sway will be absolute, unquestioned, for it holds soul and body in its grasp. Not an Indian among the Six Nations but will be my slave. It would be a grand destiny to make those people great and potent—to teach them the arts of civilization—to make them the equals of people across the sea—to dislodge all foreign power, and build up an empire proud and powerful as those of the old world. Gaston, Gaston, will you accept this greatness?"

Gaston stood silent and confounded; he began to believe the girl insane, and listened with a feeling of pity for what seemed to him the ravings of partial madness.

"Speak!" she cried. "Would not that be a destiny worthy of the proudest man alive? Does not the idea of such dominion thrill your heart, as trumpets in full blast kindle war steeds with a thirst for battle?"

"I see only the impossibility," he replied, coldly and solemnly.

"That is because you have not considered—because you do not understand. I tell you that the Indians believe that I am the gift of the Great Spirit; they will obey me as a prophetess; body and soul every human being in the Nations will belong to me. Nor will my power stop there. Think how far and wide dominion could be extended. These Nations once skilled in civilized arts would subjugate every tribe upon this continent, until an empire could be built up that would extend from sea to sea—an empire that shall defy the white robbers that have trampled us down."

"And do you really dream of these things?" he demanded, in wonder. "Is it possible that these are your hopes and thoughts?"

"They are possibilities," she exclaimed, mistaking the feeling which had prompted the question, and believing that he had yielded to the great object she held out. "Every one of them shall be realized."

"Think how impossible for a woman—"

"Not for Katharine," she interrupted; "not for the man who loves her. Could you once see her among the red-men, you would understand her great influence. It is rooted deep in their religion; no power could ever weaken or tear it out."

"This is madness. How, I pray, did such wild thoughts find strength in this young heart? These projects—can it be that you have been dreaming of them all these years?"

"They have made up my life, and shall be realities. Not one but shall be fulfilled. Even now every thing is ready; the Nations await my arrival with anxiety; every week brings me tidings of their anxiety to have me among them. They want a leader."

"And you will go?"

"Is not power a grand thing?" she demanded. "Does it not make your heart thrill to think of such absolute dominion?"

"Power!" he repeated. "Yes, it would be great power."

"But Katharine's heart would be lonely without some one who

could fully understand her plans and aspirations. The Indians would be only her slaves. She needs a companion—one whose power should be made equal to her own, who could stand side by side with her in his authority."

A perception of her meaning had gradually dawned on the heart of the young man, but it only filled him with deeper abhorrence, blotting out the sort of pity he had a few moments before felt for what he deemed the fancies of partial madness.

"Answer," she said, and a thrill of deep tenderness ran through her voice. "Can you not understand this? Can not your heart complete the vision?"

"No Indian could thus aid you," he said, hesitatingly. "No chief is educated as you have been."

"No, no," she exclaimed, impatiently; "have I not told you these savages are only my slaves? I must have a companion who shall be my equal; one whom I can trust and honor, whom I can love. Ah, great Manitou, how I could love him!"

She paused. Her hands were clasped, her lips trembled, the fire of her eyes was veiled under the thick lashes.

"Not the love of a weak girl," she went on, "not a clinging affection which has neither prestige nor strength—a love intense as hate and strong as death, gaining power and dominion only to share it with the one beloved. Gaston de Laguy, would not love like this satisfy any man? Does it not make you forget the poor dreams of happiness you have been weaving here? Speak to me—speak to me I can say no more."

She stopped, leaning slightly forward, and waiting in breathless silence for her answer. He affected to believe that her question had no personal connection with himself, and he answered, coldly:

"If a man had a heart to give, such proud dreams might charm him; but, after all, I doubt if he would be more happy than I shall be in the love and companionship of my little Adele."

For an instant Katharine stood like a panther about to spring; her hand clutched at something concealed in her bosom; in that instant Gaston de Laguy was nearer to his death than he had ever been, even in the heat of battle.

There was a footstep near; Katharine and de Laguy started simultaneously.

Katharine drew back; his cold words had revealed to her like a flash of midnight lightning, the precipice upon which she stood. In that moment the wild love in her heart hardened into hate more fierce than she had ever before felt—she stood up proudly, her soul concentrated in one scornful glance.

"Go," she exclaimed; "I wish to walk here alone."

He bowed with the courtesy which marked his slightest movement, and went away, but her secret was safe. Bold, unfeminine, half insane as he thought her, no word of his would ever betray the confidence she had imposed on him.

Left to herself, Katharine dashed up and down the winding paths of the garden, panting for breath and striving to cool the fever in her veins.

"He spurns and despises me—*me!*" she exclaimed. Gaston de Laguy, you have sealed your death warrant as well as hers. Power, power, there is vengeance in it, if not love!"

She pushed her hair back from her forehead, to let the cool breeze blow over her burning temples. In the stillness, she could hear distinctly the labored pulsations of her heart.

"I believe I have been mad! I did think he might love me! Am I growing feeble? Am I a love sick girl? No, no! Henceforth, I am, indeed, Mahaska, the Avenger! Tremble, every white man of you all, you shall have need of aid at that name! I will make it a word of terror that shall blanch your cheeks to hear. The last link that bound me to that hated race is broken; I will leave their close cities forever, but I will leave behind me that which shall be the beginning of a new life."

She turned abruptly and walked toward the house, heedless that her rich garments were wet and stained with dew; she had no room for womanly thoughts then.

Late in the evening, Adele and Gaston de Laguy were standing in a small room off one of the great saloons; they had approached the window seat, and the heavy draperies fell fantastically around them, as they stood looking out on the calm loveliness of the night.

A still form glided into the room, and stood unperceived among the shadows; it was Katharine, watching and alert.

"I hope she will not go, Adele," Gaston was saying; "I can give no reason, but I dread that girl; I always feel as if some wild animal of the forest were near me, when she approaches."

"Fie, fie!" Adele answered. "My queenly Katharine! You shall not speak so of her—you must learn to love her, or I will not love you."

"I can not overcome this aversion," he answered.

"She is wild, and strange, and proud, but remember it is her Indian blood that makes her so."

"It is that which I so thoroughly detest," exclaimed Gaston. "I loathe these savages more every day. The moment she gets excited, she looks more like an Indian than any thing else."

"You are unjust; I do not like to hear you speak so; I have loved Katharine dearly, for years; I might have loved her better, if she would have permitted it; but she is very dear to me."

"Then let us talk of something else," returned Gaston; "I cannot like her. It is impossible to force myself to do so."

Out of the shadows glided the pale listener, away through the long corridors, until she reached the solitude of her chamber.

"I am rightly punished," she muttered, "craven Mahaska! I ought to have torn my heart out weeks since, rather than have given way to this madness, but it is past now! Ay, I am a wild animal

of the woods, Gaston de Laguy ! Beware of my spring ! She dares to plead my cause—that puny babe ! Oh, let me wait—wait still a little longer—the end is near ! ”

CHAPTER XI

THE CAST OF THE DIE

THE grey dawn was breaking over Quebec. The first gleams of sunlight had begun to tinge river and forest, as Katharine rowed her canoe again toward the island.

She had not been in bed that night; not once had sleep approached her eyelids. She had sat in her room, dreaming neither of love or power, but of such humiliation as a woman never forgives. For the time she could only hear the one voice in her soul, which called loudly for vengeance on those who had so wounded her pride.

Again she approached her grandmother's lodge, which the night before she had quitted with such haughty exultation, determined to carry out her own passionate desires, in spite of the wishes and opposition of all the Indian tribes. In those few hours, the whole current of her life had changed.

She absolutely looked years and years older in the cold morning light; her face was ghastly pale; her lips parched and hot with fever. Her heart had received a wound which burned out the last trace of womanly feeling forever. Her career among the whites was ended. She had nothing to do now but leave the horror of her revenge behind; then she would give herself wholly up to the new life which awaited her.

She must act speedily and with decision. Even in the maddest whirl of her passion she could think calmly, could lay her plans with the most unerring precision. The white heat of her passion left the brain cool.

The old Indian woman was sitting just where Katharine had left her the morning before. She had only risen at intervals to replenish the logs which crackled and roared in the rude chimney, then crept back to her old attitude, so full of desolation and despair.

Katharine's words had crushed the only hope which bound her to life. For years she had lived upon the thought of the greatness which awaited her grandchild; she had dreamed, night and day, of the power so soon to be hers, and now every hope had been crushed to the earth by the one mad passion of a heart which had proved as weak as that of any woman among the pale faces.

Katharine swept back the heavy furs and entered the lodge. The old woman knew her step; but no thrill of expectancy lighted up her

dreary hopelessness. She supposed that the girl had only come to urge more imperiously the fulfillment of her wishes, and felt too weak and broken for further contest.

Katharine stood for a moment looking at her in silence, then she said slowly :

“ Let my grandmother arise—Mahaska will speak with her.”

The old woman drew nearer the fire, looking feeble and worn.

“ Let Mahaska speak—Nemono’s widow can struggle no more. She is old and weary, like a pine whose branches are broken off by heavy storms, she only longs now to creep into her grave and hide herself.”

“ Peace,” returned Katharine; “ my grandmother shall live long. Mahaska comes to put new life in her veins.”

The old woman shook her head sadly.

“ Mahaska comes now to talk of hate—she tramples love under her feet,” she exclaimed in a terrible voice. “ To swear vengeance against the white race—to ask Ahmo’s aid to curse and crush them.”

The woman uttered a cry of joy and sprung upright; her frame seemed to recover its former strength; her eyes lighted up with new brightness and vitality.

“ Mahaska’s words are music,” she cried; “ they bring new life to Ahmo’s soul.”

Katherine did not change under this ebullition of joyful surprise. She stood there, cold and terrible, as some evil spirit awaiting the moment to act.

“ The weak dream is gone forever,” continued the old woman, “ Mahaska no longer wishes to bring a stranger to rule among her people.

Katherine turned upon her with suppressed fury.

“ The old woman has slept, and the dream spirit whispered foolish things in her ears,” she hissed; “ let her wake, and think no more of those ravings.”

The woman bowed submissively; henceforth she must yield her own will where Katherine was concerned; but she submitted willingly; her whole heart was now absorbed by the joy which her words had brought to her heart.

“ Let Mahaska speak—what does she wish ? ”

Katherine knotted her hands hard together under the loose sleeves of her robe; her mouth settled more firmly into its look of fiendish cruelty; that was all the change.

“ Does my grandmother remember the pale faced girl in the Governor’s castle ? ” she asked. “ The one I brought here that you might know her again when the time come.”

“ She has not forgotten.”

“ The death cries of the girl shall be music for Mahaska—she must die.”

The woman nodded.

“ The old woman’s hand has not grown feeble—she can still mix the poison which drank the life of the pale girl’s mother.”

"No, no," interrupted Katherine, impatiently; "that is not what Mahaska wishes. Such a death would be too speedy and swift."

"Let Mahaska speak."

"The girl must be taken from the castle, carried into the forest; Mahaska will sing a song of triumph before her death-pyre—the spirit of Chilili will be appeased."

"But the red-men are at peace with the Governor chief?—"

"Tush! what need to bring trouble by the act! It matters not if they want war let them have it! Mahaska will lead her people."

"Will Mahaska go now?" demanded the woman.

"The day that sees that girl a prisoner Mahaska will follow her people into the forest, to abide with them forever."

The old squaw uttered an exclamation of joy, but Katherine stood cold and impassive as before.

"Can this thing be done?" she asked.

"Let the old woman think! We must be cautious; the pale-faces are strong."

"Mahaska will not be put off with vain words and idle fears. This pale-faced girl *must* be here, for life or death!"

"It is well, Mahaska shall be obeyed."

"But when—when? Every moment is an age."

"Revenge can wait," returned the woman; "slow and sure, is safety."

"Swift and deadly," exclaimed Katherine; "silent and terrible—that shall be Mahaska's way of seeking it."

"The tribe shall be warned," said the woman after a pause. "The whole Nations must meet together to greet Mahaska as their queen."

"First my revenge," she hissed. "I will hear of no triumph, no rejoicing until this white-faced girl is taken from beneath my father's roof and hurled among the savages I am to rule."

"The young chief Gi-en-gwa-tah will be here," said the old woman suddenly. "Mahaska can talk with him of the thing she desires."

"If I am not aided now I will never join the tribe," exclaimed the girl; "if they thwart me I will seek out other nations and take my wisdom and all that the great Manitou has given me to them."

"Mahaska would never forsake the people of her nation," returned the old woman, shocked by her words, "if she did the Great Spirit would take all her power from her."

"Let them obey my wishes, then," she cried, "or I can not answer for what I may do."

"Mahaska shall be a queen among her people," said the woman; "the old chiefs shall listen to her words as messages from the Manitou himself."

"It is well," she said impatiently; "let it be so."

"But they ask one thing," continued the old woman. "Mahaska must grant that."

She turned haughtily.

"Do they dare to make conditions?"

"She must accept a husband from among her own people. Nemo-no's line must not perish with a woman."

"I have told you, old woman, never to address these words to me," she said, frowning; "Mahaska is angry."

"That she *must* bear! her grandmother knows the chiefs better than the maiden does! If Mahaska consents to this, she will be indeed a queen; it will be the last time her will can be disputed—but the chiefs are firm—long ago it was revealed to their great prophet, who is dead, that Mahaska was to do this."

The girl shuddered—this thought was terrible to her, but with her usual decision she looked at the matter full and sternly upon every side. Could she conquer her repugnance to the idea of a marriage with one of the unlettered savages she meant to rule!

"It is a part of their religion," continued the woman; "it was the last word the prophet spoke. Ahmo knows the people; they will never yield there."

"And have they chosen my husband?" she demanded.

"The chiefs look with favor upon Gi-en-gwa-tah, the young chief of the Senecas; but Mahaska can choose. He is young, a great brave, straight as a young pine and full of wise thoughts."

Katharine sat down and for some moments gave way to bitter reflection. The old squaw did not intrude upon her; she sat curled up among her furs, cautiously watching the girl with crafty patience.

"I hear a step," she said, "the young brave is coming."

The wolf skins were thrown back as she spoke and the chief entered the lodge. His eyes kindled when they fell upon Katharine, and a smile brightened his stern mouth.

"Gi-en-gwa-tah feels that it is indeed spring," he said, "he sees the cherry blossoms now."

"Mahaska is no child," she answered, "to be pleased with vain words. Why is Gi-en-gwa-tah here?"

"Has not Ahmo told the maiden? The chiefs sent him to hold counsel with her that she might unfold their wishes to Mahaska."

She did not speak. The struggle in her mind was still terrible. She knew how the memory of the prophet was revered among the savages of the whole Six Nations, and felt that she had no choice but to obey his dying command or give up all thoughts of revenge and power.

The last gentle remnants of womanhood died rapidly out of her heart during that stern self-communion, and when she looked up again her face was hard as iron.

Ahmo will tell the chief what Mahaska wishes done before she joins her people," she said, and, rising, went out of the lodge into the forest.

There she stood looking straight before her, cold and stern as a

Nemesis, meditating upon her fate. It was no struggle for her to forsake the elegancies and luxuries of civilized life. All that was necessary to her she could have about her in the forest—she longed to be rid of such companionship; but the idea of wedding the dusky chief struck her proud heart with abhorrence. Then she remembered the absolute dominion that would be hers, the vengeance she could wreak upon the hated race and forget her repulsion—forget everything but a burning desire for power and revenge—Katharine's resolution was taken.

She heard Ahmo call her name and moved back toward the lodge. As she approached, the young chief came out to meet her, his face stern with suffused emotion.

"Gi-en-gwa-tah will obey the maiden's wishes," he said.

"It is well," she replied.

"Let her be secret and wary; the nations are at peace with this people—"

"It matters not," she interrupted; this thing *must* be as Mahaska wishes."

"Let Mahaska speak; the chief will listen! When the day comes that she sends him this eagle's plume, he will know the hour is at hand, he will obey her."

He took an eagle's feather from his hair and handed it to her. She twisted it among the coronet of feathers which she wore, while a sudden joy lighted up the Indian's face as he looked. Ahmo came forward and whispered in a tone that was audible to him:

"Mahaska remembers that if this thing is done she promises to obey the command of the great prophet!"

The chief leaned eagerly forward to catch her answer, and, after one last struggle, she said:

"When Mahaska's will is accomplished let the chief who has obeyed her words claim his reward."

Not all the stoicism of his nature could keep back the evidences of delight with which the young brave listened to her answer. He looked a splendid specimen of manly beauty, as he stood there, with his powerful frame agitated by the new emotions that thrilled through it; but Katharine's eyes were far off, she saw only the future, full of power and terror, to which she was hastening forward.

"Ahmo is content," said the woman; "she has waited long for his hour."

Katharine started at her words, cast one bewildering glance upon the chief from her great eyes, and said slowly:

"Let Gi-en-gwa-tah remember!"

She made a parting gesture with her hand, and, with that mute farewell, turned back among the windings of the forest, while the aged woman and the chief stood watching her until her lithe form had disappeared.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TIGRESS SHOWS HER FANGS.

ONE pleasant afternoon the two young girls and Gaston, accompanied by a single servant, rode forth on horseback, and took the forest path which led to Montmorenci Falls. They had not set forth with the intention of going there, but scarcely were they mounted when Katharine began talking of a rise in the water which would give fresh grandeur to the cataract, and Adele exclaimed, with girlish impulsiveness :

“ Oh, let us ride there. I should rather go as we are than with a party.”

Gaston consented with a smile. His young mistress' wishes were his at all times, and perhaps nothing cheered him more than the entire freedom from etiquette which existed among them when they broke away from the formalities of the castle.

“ Katharine can pioneer us better than any guide,” said Adele. “ She knows every foot of ground about the falls.”

“ But do you go to such solitary places with no attendants ? ” he asked.

“ Oh, it is much pleasanter to have no one but old Martin,” said Adele.

“ Is Monsieur fearful ? ” asked Katharine, with a sneer.

“ It is that I am not accustomed to seeing ladies of Mademoiselle Adele's station make such expeditions unattended,” he replied, coldly.

Katharine bit her lips at the slight emphasis laid upon her companion's name, and Adele added quickly :

“ Ah, but we are not in France, remember, we are in America, and can be as wild as we please. I have set my heart on going, Monsieur Gaston; I must not be disappointed. I am sure there are no Indians about but those at peace with the French, so there is nothing to fear.”

They rode swiftly on, laughing and conversing gayly, and Katharine was actually the merriest of the party. De Laguy had never seen her in such spirits, and looked at her in astonishment; but the bright, dark face revealed only pleasurable emotions. She seemed to give herself up to the gayety of the hour with as complete an abandon as Adele herself.

She was perfectly acquainted with the road, and showed them an Indian path passable with horses which would shorten their ride considerably.

At last they came within hearing of the cataract, and Katharine said :

"We had better leave the horses here. Martin can stay and watch them. It is only a little way now.

Gaston felt a vague unwillingness in the whole expedition. It was so contrary to his habits, even to his ideas of propriety, and, more than all, he could not feel that his beautiful treasure was safe in that gloomy forest. Even then he could have urged their return, had he not feared a misinterpretation of his motives.

He sprung off his horse, and assisted the ladies to dismount. They fastened up their long riding-skirts, and Katherine took the lead to show them the path, amid so much laughter and jesting that Gaston forgot his uneasiness, and was soon as gay as the rest.

A plunge still deeper into the ravines of the forest, a height gained, and they stood almost upon the brink of the cascade, having come upon it with a suddenness that was almost startling.

It was a scene of wonderful grandeur, not the less so because the forests were losing the first flush of their autumn tints, and some of the giant old trees were almost lifeless, and sometimes threw their weird arms toward the sky, as if pleading against the cold winter that threatened them. Many of these denuded trees clustered around the falls, and appeared to shiver under the baptism of spray that seemed to laugh among the last leaves that fell from their branches.

But the air was bracing and clear as crystal upon the heights where they stood, though the soft haze of a late Indian summer floated around Orleans Island, that lay in the river at their feet, and still kept the mellow gorgeousness of its foliage in full glow.

Katharine looked keenly in the direction of her grandmother's lodge, and recognized, with a cruel flash of the eye, a streamer of red cloth floating from one of the elms that overshadowed the rude dwelling. Content with this signal, which no one observed but herself, she turned upon her companions with a wild outburst of gayety more brilliant than any thing she had exhibited that day.

"Are you not repaid for coming?" she asked, addressing Gaston.

"Did you ever see a more beautiful spectacle?"

"Beautiful indeed," he answered, with a sort of awe, the poetry, which made the under-current of his nature, fully roused by the scene.

"And little sign of wild beasts or savages," Katherine said.

He laughed gayly.

"Ah, Mademoiselle, if you ever possess a treasure precious as mine, you will guard it as carefully as I do."

The glance exchanged between the pair roused the fiend still stronger in the woman's soul. She turned away and left them to themselves. For a time they forgot her absence in the earnest conversation of which lovers never weary.

Suddenly above the roar of the cataract they recognized her voice.

"Where can she be?" cried Adele, in terror. "She may be hurt, she is so reckless. Run, Gaston, make haste."

They hurried in the direction of the voice, and coming out upon a ravine above the falls, looked over it, for again from its depths they heard her distinctly crying out. They looked down the rugged sides, and far below, clinging to the bushes, beheld her in a position so dangerous that Adele shrieked with terror.

"There is no danger," Katharine cried, her clear voice audible above the deadened roar of the cascade. "I have hurt my foot. Can you reach me a shawl on a stick?"

They tried to obey her, but the distance was too great.

"I must go down the rocks and help her," Gaston said.

Adele did not attempt to prevent him, although her cheek grew white as snow, and she trembled violently.

"Be careful," she said, with a dry sob; "oh, be careful, and may the Virgin protect you."

She gave one look as he plunged over the rocks, then fell upon the ground, and buried her face in her hands, unable to bear the sight of what appeared to her his imminent peril.

In truth, the way was less dangerous than it appeared. There were many crevices in the rocks that afforded secure foothold, and the bushes and bent trees gave ample support. To Katharine it was an easy path, and she watched with undisguised scorn the care and difficulty with which the young man made his way down the steep.

He got near enough, so that he could lean against a tree and hold his hand within her reach.

"Pray come quickly," he said; Adele is frightened to death."

Katharine sprang to her feet with a mocking laugh.

"And Monsieur is not frightened any?"

"I am a poor mountaineer," he said. "I confess I prefer other expeditions to this."

At that moment a cry sounded from above that blanched Gaston's cheek, and sent the wild fire more hotly to the girl's black eyes.

"It is Adele," he said. "I pray you come; she is frantic with terror."

"Perhaps she has seen a wild beast or a savage! How dreadful!" exclaimed Katharine.

At those words Gaston turned and fled up the rocks, wild with apprehension, and, with another wicked laugh, Katharine sprang boldly up in another and steeper direction.

She gained the summit an instant before Gaston, and as he reached it, he saw her pointing wildly toward the forest, while another cry, fainter and indistinct, ran through the trees. He looked, and saw Adele disappearing in a winding of the forest, carried in the arms of an Indian.

The young man sprang forward with a frenzied cry, but after a hundred steps lost his way completely, and could only return. He saw Katharine standing on the bank of the falls, with the same smile on her lips.

"Devil," he cried, in his insanity, "you have done this! You shall be torn limb from limb."

"Monsieur likes feeble women," she said; "he knows now how sweet it is to suffer."

She hurried off through the woods, mounted her horse, and rode swiftly away.

With all the speed that his horse could make, the frenzied young noble and the frightened groom sped along the road, which the party had traversed but a few hours before with such reckless cheerfulness.

It is impossible to put such emotions as de Laguy experienced in to words; the highest-wrought expressions fall so far short of suffering like his, that we shrink helplessly from the task.

But when they reached the city, the wretched young man was spared the pains of breaking the tidings to the miserable father, although he was met at the castle gate with a new tale of horror, which added to his pain.

The Governor had been seized with an apoplectic attack, and the physician was in despair of his life.

De Laguy sought one of the chief officers, and told his fearful news. Preparations for a vigorous pursuit were at once made, although the officer was inclined to believe it the work of some single savage who had probably become fascinated with the girl, and had taken that opportunity to carry her off.

"I know not why," exclaimed de Laguy, "but I can not help feeling as if that dreadful Indian half-breed were at the bottom of the thing."

"Who, Mademoiselle Katharine? Oh, impossible. Where is she, by the way?"

"In the castle, I suppose; she rode off alone."

"More likely gone to the Indians. Be of good cheer, Monsieur. Go up to the Governor's chamber; see that this news is kept from him. By the time you return I will have a party ready to start."

Within an hour they were under way, and in the excitement of expectation, de Laguy lost at least a portion of his misery.

That night, while the Governor lay on his bed in the half consciousness to which he had been aroused, Katharine, the Indian girl, presented herself in the chamber, having entered the castle by some method known to herself alone. Only one attendant was sitting by Frontenac at the time, an old man who knew Katharine's real history, and had always been full of sympathy and affection for her.

She crossed the room lightly, and touched his shoulder

"Is he asleep, Pierre?" she whispered.

"I think so; but you can not tell, he lies that way so much of the time."

He looked at her in astonishment, for she still wore her riding-habit, and it was stained with dew and tangled with burrs, as if she had walked a long distance

"Mademoiselle, too, has been searching for the young lady?" he said.

"Yes, yes, of course! But see, he stirs."

Pierre looked about for some medicine which should have been there, but could not find it.

"If he might ask Mademoiselle to stay there while he ran down to the housekeeper's room—"

"Yes; go, go!" said Katharine, with the same wild haste. "I will stay here."

When the sound of his footsteps had died away, she went up to the bed, thrust aside the draperies, and laid her hand roughly upon the sleeper's shoulder.

"Awake!" she cried, in the Indian tongue, with which he was perfectly familiar; "awake, I say."

He started violently, and opened his eyes with a start, scarcely recognizing the face that bent over him, it was so changed by the terrible passion of the moment.

"Why are you sleeping here?" she demanded; "knows not the white Governor what has happened?"

"Katharine!" he said, speaking with difficulty, "Katharine."

"My name is Mahaska. Look at me, man. I am the Avenger! Ay, I am the daughter of her you cruelly murdered! You have given me repulsion and loathing instead of love—me, her child, you have made a thing for the pale-faces to laugh at. Did you forget that I was an Indian, and would be avenged?"

He shrank from her touch, unable to decide whether the scene was real, or the effect of his disordered brain.

"You brought a fair wife to rule in these walls. Did you think that she could stay? Old Ahmo, my grandame, mingled the drink that gave her to the death-sleep—do you hear? Did you know it?"

He started up with a low cry, putting out his hand as if to shut her from his sight; but she went on pitilessly.

"You thrust Mahaska from your heart, and put the white woman's child there, but the strange bird that took my nest is lost. If you would find the creature you call daughter, search the forest—question the wild eagle in his flight. She is gone—lost; you will see her no more. I, your wronged child, tell you this."

The sick man started up with a fearful cry, flinging out the only arm he could use. Katharine fled from the room.

When the servant entered the Governor was struggling wildly to get off the couch, muttering incoherent words, while the great vein stood out upon his forehead. The man grew alarmed, and summoned assistance.

"My child, my child!" was all the unhappy man could articulate, when the physician entered.

They could not divert his mind from that subject, and at last they were forced to tell him that she was not in the castle.

"It was true, then—she is murdered!"

With another agonized cry he sunk back upon the bed in terrible

convulsions, and before the next day closed, Count Frontenac, the Governor of Canada, lay cold as marble in the state chamber of the castle.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CAPTIVITY.

ALL that afternoon the hapless Adele was borne swiftly through the forest by her Indian captors, who answered neither her entreaties or demands, but hurried through the trackless recesses of the wilderness with untiring strength.

After a time, and as night began to come on, her despair sunk to a sort of dumb apathy. She ceased to weep—to cry out; her eyes no longer wandered about the forest, in the wild hope that she should see Gaston hastening to her rescue. She ceased to have any such expectation—she was lost.

When night came they reached a sort of encampment, where Adele could discover that a considerable body of savages were encamped. The flames from their fire rose up red and clear in the evening air; but a stillness pervaded the place, which was more terrible to Adele than the hush of the forest had been.

She was taken into a wigwam, where she found a bed of balsam boughs spread for her accommodation. They brought her corn cake and water, but she was too thoroughly exhausted by fear and suffering to taste a morsel, and threw herself upon her rude couch, with a desponding effort to forget in sleep this horrible trouble which had come upon her.

But it was long before slumber visited her eyelids. She would fall into a doze, and waken with a cry from a dream that she was once more at home, to hear the night wind moaning among the pine trees, and the low murmurs of the savages as they sat grouped about their camp-fires.

Once she heard a sudden tumult arise, the cause for which she could not divine. Her first thought was that they were about to put her to death, and she fell back upon her bed to moan out one last prayer for help in her hour of peril. But no footsteps approached the wigwam where she was confined, and, after the first sickening horror was past, she lay still and listened, while at every new sound her heart appeared to cease its pulsations.

Then it seemed to her that the tones she heard were those of joy. She tried to hear if by chance any of the words which Katherine had taught her were used, that she might gain some faint idea of the talk that was going on; but no familiar phrase could be distinguished.

Then a voice struck her ear which brought still wilder agitation—it was Katherine's; she was sure of it! She must have been taken captive also, and Gaston with her. There was joy in the thought that at least they were near.

“Katherine! Katherine!” she cried, wildly.

There was no answer, but the dark face of the Indian sentinel appeared at the opening, and, by a stern gesture, imposed silence upon her. She fell back and covered her face with her hands, to shut out the fierce image which brought back all the agonizing terror of the past hours.

Toward morning she fell into the troubled sleep of exhaustion, and forgot for a time, at least, the terrible realities which surrounded her, the petted, idolized girl, who all her life had been so carefully shielded from every thing which could even bring her a moment's annoyance—this was her fate at last.

It was, indeed, Katherine's voice that reached her ear, and the tumult which had arisen was caused by her arrival.

Attended by several savage guides, the girl and her grandmother entered the open space where the Indians were encamped. The scouts in the forest had given the signal of her approach, and the red men pressed eagerly forward to obtain a sight of the singular being whom they believed to have been bequeathed to them by the Great Spirit, and who was destined to wield a terrible influence over their future course.

Katherine advanced into the circle and looked about the strange scene which, although unwitnessed before, appeared more familiar to her than the luxurious home of the past years. This weird encampment, with its painted warriors, gratified every instinct of her savage nature.

There was imagination enough in her character to feel the charm of that grand old forest, lighted up by the blaze of camp-fires, for a little distance, that only made the gloom beyond more profound.

The stern visages grouped around had no terror for her—she saw in them only abject slaves, who should be curbed to her will and taught to obey her commands blindly, as if they had come from their Manitou himself.

She wore a dress which was a mingling of savage and civilized costume, arranged with an eye to picturesque effect, which would strike those rude natures, and combining the bright colors which at that age pleased her fancy.

In the depths of her heart she had scorned the gentle vanities which are felt by the civilized lady. But now independent of her savage instincts, she reveled in bright colors in order to captivate the rude people it was her ambition to command. She was a girl still, in spite of her ambition and cold heart, to a certain degree impulsive, and feeling the charm which bright decorations has for that occasion; so she yielded to her savage taste with a thrill of pleasure, and gloried in the outburst of admiration that met her. She wore a

robe of bright scarlet, bordered with black fur, girded at the waist by a gold cord, and falling back at the shoulders to reveal an under dress of pliant doe-skin, which fitted closely to her rounded bust, and was confined by jeweled buttons. She wore leggins of the same soft skin, fringed with chipped leather, and decorated with a delicate embroidering of silk and wampum, and her slender moccasins were elaborately wrought in the same tasteful manner, lined with scarlet, and fringed with a wampum of gold and coral. Her beautiful hair was drawn back from her forehead, and wreathed about the back of her head in a thousand tiny plaits, and among the shining braids was twisted a coronet of black and crimson feathers, after the fashion which had dwelt upon her fancy from early girlhood.

A single ornament composed of rubies and emeralds glittered upon her forehead, and about her slender throat was clasped a necklace of the same brilliant gems, that reflected back the blaze of the torches which they held about her, in a thousand magnificent hues, and shone with every movement of her head like a circlet of flame.

Fastened in her girdle she wore a dagger in a curiously wrought scabbard, upon the haft of which her right hand rested carelessly, as she stood looking round upon the astonished savages.

Never had her beauty appeared to greater advantage than in that singular dress, and with those wild surroundings. Her eyes blazed like those of a she eagle, and a fierce, exultant smile curled her beautiful mouth, as she saw the impression which her appearance had made upon the group.

Ahmo stood a little behind her, glancing from her child to the Indians, eager to note any change in their faces, and when she saw how deeply they were struck by her loveliness and majesty, she shrank farther back, to indulge, unobserved, in the delight which the realization of all her hopes gave to her guarded, exultant old heart.

There were only two or three chiefs among the party, and they stepped forward with quiet dignity to receive her, though you could see how even those proud warriors, who looked upon their women only as children or slaves, were moved by the grandeur of the haughty girl, as she awaited to return their greeting.

"Nemomo's grandchild is welcome," said the oldest of the group; "the chiefs will conduct her to her people—they have waited long for her coming, and will receive her as a gift from the Great Spirit."

"Mahaska will never again leave her tribe," she answered; her deep, rich voice sounding clear and distinct through the circle. "She has left the homes of the pale-faces forever—Mahaska is all Indian now."

"It is well," they answered; "the maiden's voice is soft as the wind among the pine trees, but her words are full of wisdom as those of a great prophet."

"Mahaska is a prophet," she said; "The Great Spirit sends her visions by which she can direct her people—will they listen to her words?"

"Let Mahaska wait till our journey is ended, and she is among her assembled people—she will be content."

She bowed her head loftily, and the old chief fell back a little to allow Gi-en-gwa-tah to approach. He drew near her reverentially, as if she had indeed been some beautiful spirit sent among them by the Great Father, through his awe broke the young love which had dawned upon him, and given to his life the brightness which love alone can confer, whether the heart in which it finds a resting place is covered with russet or kingly mantle. She looked upon him with haughty indifference.

At that moment, the pleading voice of the poor captive rose wailingly upon the air.

"Katharine! Katharine!"

"The caged bird cries like a child," said the woman scornfully, turning to her grandmother, "but she speaks a name that have I forgotten."

Her brows contracted under their coronet as she spoke, and a hard, cruel expression took the place of the fierce pride which had glowed in her face before.

"Is Mahaska satisfied?" asked the young chief.

"Gi-en-gwa-tah has done well," she answered, in a low voice, inaudible to those around; "he shall be the first chief among his people."

Then she turned away; the exultation in the young savage's face, the wild love in the black eyes fixed upon her's, filled her with a sort of abhorrence, which, for the moment, made her forget her pride and all her hungry revenge, to feel the sharp pang of womanly suffering which throbbed in her heart.

Again Adele's voice reached her ear, and the sound made her strong, steeling her mind to cruelty, and tearing from her soul the last trace of faltering or human softness.

She moved toward the lodge which had been hastily prepared for her of boughs, with tufts of leaves, yet green upon them, and accompanied by her grandmother, she paused at the entrance to wave farewell to the watching savages, and disappeared from their sight so like a beautiful spirit, that they almost feared she had vanished from among them forever.

"Is Mahaska content?" whispered the old woman, creeping close to her side in the gloom of the lodge. "Did not Ahmo speak truly—will she not be a great queen among her people?"

"And Mahaska's greatness shall be reflected upon her grand dame," returned the girl; "Mahaska never forgets."

"Ahmo is old; she only waits to see Mahaska received among her people, and then she is ready to pass into the happy hunting-ground, where Nemono awaits her coming."

"Ahmo must not talk of going away—she grieves her child, and she has need of all her strength now."

"Let her think upon her greatness, that will make her strong."

"No; the agony of this young pale-face, who stole my father's love shall be my strength—an Indian chief can love many wives, Gi-en-gwa-tah shall marry her. Then she may die of a broken heart; or, for aught I care, she may go back to her craven lover."

She spoke with a suppressed fury that startled her companion, but controlling herself at once, she flew away and flung herself upon the bed of furs.

"Mahaska is weary," she said; "with the first dawn we must be on our way—Ahmo is old, she wants rest."

The old woman lay down at her feet and was soon sleeping herself, but all through the night Katharine lay there wakeful as the poor captive whom she had torn from her home, but with thoughts as different as if had been the impassable walls of Paradise which separated her from the hapless innocent she designed for a fate more cruel than death.

History can furnish records of woman capable of the cruel deed which Katharine meditated, but such acts were almost always perpetrated under the influence of strong passion and impulse; but Katharine had not even that excuse to soften the fiendish barbarity of her plans.

With the bitterness of "a woman scorned," she had determined on the destruction of that innocent young girl, and never, since that humiliating interview in the garden, had her mind wavered from its terrible purpose. No proof of kindness or affection had been able to soften her heart; to her perverted imagination they only seemed additional wrongs.

Still, in the relentless ferocity with which she had followed that unsuspecting creature, there had been something stronger than jealousy, or more than an ordinary feeling of revenge. She really believed it was a duty with her to immolate upon the shrine of her Indian deity that helpless girl, as her grandmother had immolated the hapless bride of Count Frontenac years before. She believed that her mother's voice led her on to this step; she had dwelt upon her fancied wrongs so constantly for years, that in her dreams it returned to haunt her, and the dark visions which visited her pillow she received as communications from the spirit world, and guides to point out to her the conduct she was expected to pursue, instead of perceiving they were only the echo of her own evil imaginations and blood-thirsty instincts.

With the early morning Adele was aroused from her troubled slumber by the rude voice of her sentinel, who signified by signs that she was to rise and come forth.

The poor girl crept forth, shaking with apprehension, and chilled by the early morning air, which seemed piercing and icy to her delicate frame. They gave her food, and she partook of it, for she was weak with hunger; then they threw a heavy blanket about her, and,

without a word, she was borne away through the forest, until they came out upon the bank of a river. She saw several canoes in advance, borne swiftly down the current. In one of them a woman stood upright, looking back at them, her scarlet robe floating to the breeze, and something in the air and attitude reminded her of Katharine; but she knew that it could not be her old companion, free and in that strange dress.

She had hoped to find her and Gaston; but she now began to think that she had been deceived by the voice, and that she was entirely alone in the power of those ferocious savages.

She allowed herself to be seated in the canoe, and sunk down in passive submission, so worn out by suffering that she had ceased to hope for aid or deliverance.

The thongs which bound the delicate wrists pressed into her flesh, and caused her much pain, but in the horror of her situation, and the mental agony she endured, it was scarcely felt. There she crouched, half insane with that wild despair, asking only for a speedy death as an escape from her misery.

Under other circumstances the wild and beautiful scenery through which they passed would have filled her with delight, but now the dark solitude of the unbroken forest only brought new terror, and every lofty cliff left behind seemed only to place a new barrier between her and freedom.

Sometimes she lay half insensible in the bottom of the canoe; then she would suddenly rouse herself, thinking that she heard familiar voices summon her, and for a second believing that aid was near. But the mocking ripple of the river alone met her ear, and on swept the canoe in the wake of the other fragile barks, filled with dusky forms, that sat upright and motionless as a band of shadows floating down the fabled river of old.

She was going up stream, and knew that the river emptied itself somewhere into the St. Lawrence. Thus a painful consciousness possessed her that every beat of the paddle bore her further and further from home. Oh, how she thirsted for freedom to wander off and die alone in the forest. She envied the deer that came so daintily down to the bank for drink, and shut her eyes with a sick feeling of bondage when a bird flew over her head.

It was almost dark when the canoes landed under the shadow of a tall cliff, and the Indian to whom she was consigned helped her up the steep path. Adele caught the glare of the newly-kindled campfires, and a new desolation struck her heart, as she thought of another night in the torture of suspense.

As she gained the ascent and approached the fire, she again caught sight of the scarlet dress which had attracted her attention in the morning. The wearer was standing near the fire, conversing with one of the savages, and something in the attitude and gestures reminded her again of Katharine.

With an unexpected movement she shook off the grasp of her com-

ductor, and sprung forward. Before he could overtake her she had reached the fire, and grasped the woman's robe.

The woman turned quickly. In spite of her changed dress and look, Adele recognized her instantly.

"Katharine! Katharine!" she cried, "save me, oh save me!"

The woman shook loose her fragile hold, and frowned darkly down upon the poor girl, as she fell to the ground in the anguish of her appeal.

"The pale-face is mad," she said, replying in French; "I do not know that name."

"Oh, Katharine, what do you mean? Surely this trouble hasn't changed me so that you do not know me!" she gasped. "I have been almost insane; but there is some hope in finding you. Can we not escape? Why have they taken us? My father will pay a ransom. Plead with them, Katharine, beg them to let us go."

"Mahaska is among her own people," she replied, coldly; "the pale-face speaks idle words. They have no meaning."

Adele raised herself from the ground, and stared at her with sudden apprehension; she feared that the shock and term of her capture had turned her friend's brain. The pallid face, contracted with evil passions, and the glaring eyes that looked into her own, well justified the fear, and that new horror increased Adele's suffering tenfold.

"Oh, Katharine, Katharine!" she cried, extending her fettered hands, "don't look so—try to be calm! Perhaps help will come; my father is powerful; he will send aid."

"He is powerless here," returned the Indian girl, in a cold, hard tone; "the Indian reigns supreme in the wilderness."

"He will send out men, I know he will; they will find us—we shall be saved! Only be calm, Katherine; don't let them separate us again—cling fast to me."

Katherine smiled sternly.

"Mahaska can stand alone like the young pine," she said; "she is not a frail vine like the pale-face, that cannot live without support."

"Why do you speak in that strange way?" pleaded Adele. "What do you mean by that name?"

"It is my own."

"She is mad!" sobbed Adele, though she had no tears to soften her pain. "Oh, Kate, dear Kate, sit down by me; it is Adel that is talking to you—your own friend Adele."

"Mahaska has no friend among the pale-faces," she answered; "they are her foes—her heart is full of hatred for them."

Still Adele pleaded with her, believing that she was not conscious of her words, for it was impossible that any approach to the terrible truth should have dawned upon her.

"Dear Katy," she cried, calling her by the childish name she had often addressed her by, "do sit down here! Ask them to unbind my hands; see how they are swollen."

She held out her slender hands; red and inflamed with the hard thongs which bound them. Katherine smiled grimly at the sight.

"The pale-face cannot bear suffering," she said, "but let her be still—her groans will be music to her captors."

"You will drive me wild with those strange words!" groaned Adele. "Try to think; tell me what became of Gaston—how did he escape?"

Katherine started as if a knife had struck her. She snatched away the robe which Adele had again seized, with such violence that the poor girl fell almost prostrate.

"Fool! she exclaimed, in a deep undertone; "fool! will you never understand? I am among my own people, and you are my prisoner."

Adele raised herself, sat down upon the ground, and remained there looking at her in helpless misery, unable yet to take in the import of her words.

"You need sleep," she said, pityingly. "Ask them to show us to our wigwam. Stay with me; don't let them separate us."

"Mahaska would rather sleep with a viper hugged to her bosom, than the cowardly pale-face," she hissed.

"Call yourself Katherine," she pleaded. "Don't you know me—don't you remember Adele? Think how happy we have been together in the old castle, at our convent school. Bear up for my sake, dear, dear Katherine."

"The Indian princess does not know the name," she replied. "If the pale-face must talk, let her say Mahaska."

"What does it mean? Why do you call yourself that?"

"It means the Avenger!" she exclaimed; "and I am she! Now does the girl understand!"

"But that is not your name," cried Adele. "You have had love and kindness all your life. You have no wrongs to avenge."

"No wrongs!" she repeated, with more violence than she had before betrayed. "What was my birth—what has my whole life been? I warn you to be careful. You had better brave the wild panther in her den, than Mahaska here among her people!"

"You do not know what you say," moaned Adele. "Oh, help me to steal into the woods. You can now—I will help you. Hope would make me strong. We can get back to my father and Gaston."

The woman's fury was now uncontrollable; she laid her hand heavily on her shoulder, and almost whispered, in a voice that froze the blood in her listener's veins:

"Speak that name again, and I will tear your heart out, and send it to him as a parting gift!"

"Katherine—Katherine!" she pleaded, but the voice was now an agonized shriek, that made even the savages turn in wonder; but it excited no thrill of compassion in the heart of the iron woman that bent over her.

"Silence!" she exclaimed. "I will hear no more! Listen now

—understand me. I have forsaken the white race forever. I hate the race—you most of all! For years I have meditated this step afar off; you and yours have driven me to it!”

“Katharine!” she shrieked, again, as a perception of the truth impressed itself upon her mind.

The woman forced her into silence with a warning gesture, and Adele recoiled under the menacing look.

“The man you call father was mine—my own father. He had but one child. He drove my mother to death by neglect—starved her heart out. But what mattered the murder of the poor Indian? He kept me in his house a toy, a plaything, to pet or scorn, as the humor seized him. Then he brought you and the pale-face, his bride; but Ahmo found her in the chamber that had been her child’s. She was thirsty, this dainty white woman. Ahmo sent her drink—cool, sweet drink—but it killed her, as I would kill you, but that I wish first to see you the wife of a brave warrior.”

Adele had fallen upon the ground, and hid her face in her hands, trying to shut out those horrible words, but the woman hurried relentlessly on:

“You came between me and the man I loved, then it was time to act! I planned the snare into which you fell. You are my prisoner! I will take you far from here; you shall never see your lover’s face again. You shall die slowly with pangs of the heart, such as carried my mother to the grave. I have spoken—trouble me no more.”

She pushed the helpless creature from her, and walked rapidly away, motioning to the Indians to approach and carry her into the sleeping-place provided for. That last outrage was unheeded, for Adele’s senses had given way under that added torture, and she fell prone to the earth insensible.

They raised the poor girl, carried her away, and placed her upon her bed, where she remained unconscious, for a long hour, of the misery and danger which surrounded her.

Exulting in the pain she had given, Katharine turned back to the camp-fires, and began talking eagerly to the chiefs, inflaming their minds with the wild hopes of future greatness, which she dwelt upon, and, in her excitement, looking so much like the priestess of some dread and cruel faith, that it was no marvel they listened as if her words had been inspired, and believed that they followed the dictates of their Manitou in listening to her counsels.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PURSUIT AND THE RESCUE

THE party in pursuit of the stolen girl was enabled to track the fugitives by the skill and vigilance of their Indian guides.

To Gaston, unacquainted with forest life, it was incomprehensible how they followed the closely-covered trail, discovering a thousand signs which he could hardly distinguish, even when pointed out to him.

The young man was in a state little short of frenzy, although his companions buoyed him up with every hope possible, and kept him from absolute despair by their apparent confidence.

In the place where the savages had encamped the first night, they found a handkerchief which had belonged to Adele. They brought it to the young man, and careless, reckless, as a life of excitement and danger had made them, there was not a man but respected and sympathized with the overwhelming grief which even his pride and strength could not wholly master.

They took to the canoes, which had been brought with them, at the place where the party of whom they were in search had embarked, and it seemed like a ray of hope to Gaston to escape somewhat from the gloom of the forest, and feel himself gliding swiftly up the beautiful river.

The officer in command at the castle, forced to assume the authority left vacant by the sudden death of the Governor, had enjoined upon them the necessity of avoiding an affray with the savages, as it would be dangerous at that time to rouse the enmity of the tribe to which they belonged. They had long before this been enrolled among the nations with whom the French were at amity, and as their aid was necessary against the English, every method of conciliating them must be used.

He believed that the capture of the young girl was the work of some single savage, enamored of her wonderful loveliness, but Gaston could not rid himself of the feeling which had settled upon his mind at first, that the girl Katharine was the instigator of the deed, and it had grown into actual belief when the fact of her disappearance, coupled with the departure of her grandmother, came to his knowledge.

It was a very silent party that glided up the windings of the picturesque stream. Those gay Frenchmen were too full of sympathy for their companion to give way to their usual jests and conversation, and the sudden death of the Governor had cast an added gloom upon their spirits, for proud and retired as he was, he had made himself a

great favorite among the officers, by his personal bravery, and the kindness which characterized all his intercourse with them.

The second night came on, and a portion of the party left the boats, to seek in the woods for any trace of the camp-fires, which the Indians were certain must be near, as the party, having taken a different route from the one they were expected to choose, would feel little fear of pursuit.

It was a beautiful night. The clear sky, with its numberless stars, was reflected in the bosom of the river, disturbing and breaking up the long shadows of the cliffs with their gleams; and, over all, the full moon looked down, bathing the forest with its silver brightness, till the scene grew almost unearthly in its loveliness.

The boats moved slowly on, awaiting the return of the exploring party, and, in the stillness, Gaston's heart gained so many new fears, that, at each instant, he almost expected to hear Adele's voice calling upon him for assistance.

After a time, the men returned, and Gaston started eagerly to his feet, while one of his companions asked the question which his lips had been powerless to frame :

"Have you found them?"

"Yes; they are encamped about a quarter of a mile lower down; just beyond that great cliff."

A silent thanksgiving rose to Gaston's lips, checked only by the fearful thought that he might be too late to rescue Adele from death, which, perhaps, had saved her from the torture of fright and fatigue which she must have undergone.

"Push on at once!" he exclaimed. "For heaven's sake, don't lose a moment here."

"It will be better to wait a while," returned one of the officers "When every thing is quiet, we may be able to rescue the lady without trouble. We will send one of the Indians to reconnoiter."

Gaston felt the justice of the remark, and was forced to control his fiery impatience as well as he was able, but each moment appeared like an age upon his heart.

At length the Indian came back, and announced that every thing was quiet in the camp. The shelter where the young girl was confined was near the upper edge of the encampment, and it was decided that a portion of the party should make their way through the woods, to discover if it was not possible to get her out of their power without alarming the Indians.

They entered the boats again, and paddled down to the cliff, then Gaston and his men followed one of the Indian guides by a circuitous path, which soon brought them out back of the encampment.

They crept down on its outer verge. Every thing was still; the fires blazed up far through the darkness, and in their light lay the sentinel fast asleep.

"Pale-face in dere," whispered the guide, in broken French, to Gaston

The young man followed the direction in which he pointed, and saw the rude sort of wigwam which had been constructed to shelter her. It was no time to give way to feeling—he needed all the calmness and self-possession of which he was master.

“Get near and whisper to pale-face,” continued the guide. “Maiden know his voice—no be frightened.”

It seemed to Gaston that the pulsations of his heart must betray him as he crept along upon his hands and knees until he was close to the hut.

He paused an instant, pushed aside a piece of bark, and put his face to the aperture. In the half light he could see Adele lying within asleep.

He bent nearer and whispered :

“Adele, Adele !”

She started to her feet, but his warning whisper checked the exclamation which rose to her lips.

“Adele, it is I—Gaston—come this way !”

She pressed her manacled hands hard against her mouth to keep back the cry of joy which sprang with the great gush of joy from her heart, and crept softly toward him—so near that their hands could touch.

That was no time for words; he felt the thongs that bound her wrists, took out his knife and cut them rapidly. She could not speak, there was such confusion between hope and fear in her mind that it was with difficulty she preserved her senses. He pulled away the bark and boughs with great caution until the aperture was large enough for her to creep out with his assistance—another moment and she was in his arms, clasped close to that heart whose every pulse beat so truly for her.

They had almost gained their companions, when a cry arose from the camp. Katharine, lying in her lodge sleepless and vigilant, had caught the faint noise and hurried out. She saw the Indian asleep by the fire, looked toward the wigwam and saw Adele and Gaston, whose uniform she at once recognized.

She gave a cry of rage that roused the savages, but before they had reached the spot where she stood, the fugitives had disappeared in the forest.

“To the river,” she shouted, “to the river—they will go there.”

There was a moment’s consultation among the chiefs, then one of them said :

“Let the maiden be cautious—we will not offend our friend the great white chief.”

“They shall all die together,” she cried; “Mahaska has sworn it. There is yet time. See ! Quick, the horses—bring the horses, I command you !”

She looked scarcely human in her frenzy. Every feature was convulsed with passion, and the fire in her strained eyes was like that of some wild animal.

The chiefs approached and tried to speak with her, but she waved them fiercely away.

"Mahaska is the only brave among you," she exclaimed; "she will be obeyed."

Again the chief attempted to reason with her.

"What does the tribe call you?" she cried.

"I am called the Fox," he said, proudly.

"And have earned the title," she replied, "cunning and coward."

He turned fiercely upon her, but she looked boldly in his face, and his eyes fell under the fires of her glance.

"You have disputed my will," she said; "let the Fox beware—has he forgotten my name?"

She shouted again to the Indians in the insanity of her passion as she dashed toward the end of the encampment where the horses had been picketed.

"Secure the girl," she cried, clenching her hands in her passion.

"Gi-en-gwa-tah, obey! Follow me all of you!"

She darted along the path to the river, but the chiefs followed slowly, a signal from them restraining the eagerness of their advance.

Not one of the band dared to disobey when Katharine shouted forth her orders; but without openly disputing them the old chiefs resolved by evasion to escape any altercation with the French.

"I bid you come!" she shouted again, giving way to her fierce passion. "Quick, or they will escape."

She reached the edge of the encampment just in time to see them disappearing up the path at the utmost speed of their horses. She sprang forward with a cry of rage.

"After them!" she shouted. "The horses—quick."

"They have stolen our horses," said the chief who had before addressed her; "we have others hidden somewhere near, but we can not find them until dawn."

Katharine looked and saw that he spoke truly—the horses had all but one been taken by the fugitives.

"Cowards! knaves!" she exclaimed. "But they shall not escape—one of them, at least, shall dye."

Katharine sprang on the horse and shouted to them to follow.

"On, on!" she cried, "they shall not escape."

She snatched a tomahawk from one of the Indians and rode madly away. An awful shout answered her—the chiefs, headed by Gi-en-gwa-tah, rushed after her. A turn in the path—a break in the forest once more brought the fugitives in sight.

Katharine spurred her horse more swiftly on—a fiercer, colder rage settling over her countenance. The fugitives saw her—saw too that she was the only one on horseback, and their fears were somewhat appeased.

Gaston de Laguy was riding at the head of the party, carrying

Adele in his arms, who had half fainted from the excitement and terror of the rapid escape. Katharine whirled the tomahawk around her head. Its whiz went through her heart, turning its point. The last throb of love that ever swelled her bosom broke through her wrath and paralyzed her arm. It fell like lead against the shoulder of her horse, borne down by the weight of her tomahawk. Spite of the hatred that burned so fiercely in her bosom, spite of the dread of escape, which drove her almost insane, she had no strength to kill him with her own hand. She led the pursuit—the swiftest horse had not kept up with her impatience; but the forest behind her was red with painted warriors, flashing through it as flame leaps from thicket to thicket. She turned upon their leader—the tomahawk had dropped from her hand which she lifted wildly in the air. I can not do it—imbecile, fool, coward that I am! Bring them down—shoot him—shoot the woman on his bosom—cleave them with ten thousand arrows; smite them down with your tomahawks! Onward, onward! The chief that kills one or both shall call Katharine wife—slave. He shall be her husband, her master!”

The crowd of chiefs rushed forward, leaping like deer, some on horseback, some on foot; their leader alone had heard Katharine's challenge and her promise. But, mad with ambition, wild with savage greed for blood, they passed by her, shouting a war-whoop. Gi-en gwa-tah led, lifting his rifle, while his knees alone pressed the sides of his fleet horse.

Katharine rose in her stirrups and rode on, unconscious of the motion, jaded and cold as marble. Her white lips pressed close, her eyes one flame of rage.

Through that horrible war-whoop came the sharp crack of a rifle, a cry thrilling with pain—a woman's cry, followed by a second report. Straining her eagle sight through the smoke, Katharine saw Gaston de Laguy fall headlong from his horse, dragging the girl with him.

Something in her heart gave way; the whiz of the bullet seemed centering in its pulses, and without any warning, she reeled from her seat and fell upon the ground motionless, as her victims were being carried away by their companions.

As the wretched creature fell headlong from her saddle, the fugitives put spurs to their horses and disappeared in the windings of the forest, bearing away Gaston and Adele. The savages made no attempt to follow them—they were stunned by the unexpected disaster that had befallen them, looking down upon her still form as it lay white and motionless on the green sward, the moonlight falling full upon the upturned face, and showing it still distorted by the horrible passions which had surged up from that savage heart, when the womanhood went out of it. Over all was visible the expression of pain which had convulsed her very soul, when the bullet that struck Gaston de Laguy whizzed passed her ear.

The remainder of the Indians came slowly up to the spot where the group stood about Katharine's body.

A cry went up from a score of lips, echoed by a terrible shriek from old Ahmo, as she struggled forward and threw herself on the ground by the senseless form.

"She is dead!" she shrieked. "They have murdered your queen. Was it for this—for this!"

They raised the rigid body, and carried it slowly back to the encampment; back through the awful shadows of the wilderness which fell over her in one mighty pall—into the red light of the camp-fires, which shone up only to reveal how ghastly white a human face could be with bad passions, lying like ashes upon it.

That strange insensibility lasted for hours; it was the girl's last human weakness; and who can say what strange magnetic power linked it with the fate she had brought upon the man to whom her love had been a curse.

After the first stupor of grief, Ahmo applied every remedy that could suggest itself to her mind, while the young chief stood motionless by the insensible creature, never once turning his eye from the still, pale face. She was his wife. He had won her bravely, this great joy made his face savagely beautiful.

The dawn lay grey and broken upon the forest, when Katharine's soul returned slowly from that swoon, falling over her features like the ashen shadows of death. Ahmo bent over her with a burst of passionate affection which even her Indian nature could not repress, but there was no response.

Katharine pushed her aside and sat upright on the pile of moss where they had placed her. The half quenched fire of her eyes fell upon the chief, as he stood before her in the shadow.

"Speak," she cried impatiently.

"Nemono's grandchild is avenged," she answered; "the pale-faced brave is dead; the white dove was shot through his lady."

For a moment she was silent; there was a fierce joy in her heart from which every trace of humanity had fled forever, but mingled with it surged a deadly hatred for the man who had obeyed her command.

He went toward her and said softly:

"Does the princess remember her promise?"

"I never forget," she answered coldly, meeting his eyes unflinchingly. "Let Gi-en-gwa-tah go away—be silent, and wait."

A wild joy beautified the dusky face, and so roused every evil passion in Katharine's soul, that her hand clenched instinctively over the hilt of her poignard, but she remained otherwise immovable.

"Let Gi-en-gwa-tah go," she repeated; "in an hour we must be on our journey again. When the prophets of our tribe call for her choice, Katharine will speak—till then, silence."

He left her without a word; Katharine motioned Ahmo away, and remained motionless in her old attitude until the signal for departure was given. Then she mounted her horse and rode away through the wilderness, still and white, like a stone moving.

For many days, the Indians, with Katharine among them, traveled down great rivers and through vast forests toward that portion of the country where the powerful tribe to which they belonged was settled.

Katharine's face changed very much during that weird journey; all the light and joyousness of youth that it had ever possessed was gone forever, the great eyes had lost the mournful expression which they had formerly worn at times, and settled into a stern, hard glitter, which deepened with every hour.

Gi-en-gwa-tah watched her day after day while the love-light deepened in his eye, and accustomed as he was to the silent, reticent manner of the women of his tribe, he felt no surprise at her stern demeanor.

CHAPTER XV.

MAHASKA THE QUEEN.

THEY came out at last upon the shores of Quebec Lake, upon whose beautiful banks that tribe had their favorite hunting-grounds and usual resting-place, an Indian village having been established at the other end. It was a lovely spot, sloping down in sylvan beauty to the silvery girdle of waters that washed the beach.

A swift runner had been that morning despatched to acquaint the tribe with the news of the princess's speedy arrival and the utmost excitement and curiosity preceded her approach.

Delegates from several of the Six Nations were with the tribe waiting to receive her, and the occasion was made one of great festivity and rejoicing.

While the golden and purple light of sunset cast their gorgeousness over the beautiful lake, the canoes which bore Katharine and her train floated rapidly across the waters.

Katharine sat upright and stately in her place, while old Ahmo crouched at her feet, looking up in her face with the expression of a dumb animal watching some beloved object, but the girl's eyes did not even fall upon her, she was too busy with her own wild thoughts, to notice those about her.

They were nearing the shore—the crowd upon the banks was distinctly visible, and the warriors from the canoes sent up a cry that was answered by a shout from the assembled savages on the shore.

Then a song of triumph swept over the waters, and in the midst of this savage rejoicing, Katharine stepped on shore and received the greeting of the chiefs who crowded about her.

She had a wonderful command of language, and the brief, terse

speech in which she replied to their welcome, well supported the idea they had acquired of her wonderful powers.

It was an impressive scene, that great multitude of copper-faced men, with the women and children in the back ground, crowding about that pale, stately girl, who stood among them with all the dignity of a European monarch, receiving the homage of her vassals. There was something fearful too in the idea of that woman, so young and beautiful, forsaking the luxuries of civilized life, to take up her home in that vast wilderness, among those untutored savages. Had she gone with the spirit of self-abnegation, which would have animated a good woman to use her influence so to turn their thoughts from evil, to moderate their passions and imbue them with the spirit of Christianity, there would have been something touching and holy in the scene, but she appeared among them like the spirit of evil, and to lead them on to still darker deeds and more relentless cruelty.

When she signified her desire to be led to her own dwelling, the old chiefs gathered about her and the whole tribe followed slowly toward the lodge which had been prepared for her reception.

She turned upon the threshold—dismissed the throng with a wave of the hand, and disappeared within the gloom of the interior.

With another fierce shout that pealed far through the forest, the multitude dispersed and turned back toward the settlement. Standing in the gloom, Katharine caught that exultant cry, but her iron soul did not shiver at the sound. She had done with all womanly weaknesses forever.

When Ahmo entered the lodge, she found that her grand-daughter had retired into the apartment where she slept, and even the old woman did not venture to intrude upon her privacy.

All night long Katharine sat in the gloom of her solitude, reflecting upon the life before her.

She had taken the first step which gave her soul wholly up to thoughts of revenge and power. Fierce memories tugged at her heart-strings, but found no relief in words. There she sat, stern and cold—pitiless for herself as she was for others, crushing down her mad thoughts with an iron hand, and fixing her mind upon the goal which she had promised her ambition to attain.

When the day broke, she passed out of her chamber quiet and cold as ever; but the beautiful face had grown still more hard, and the last expression of human softness had disappeared from her eyes.

Ahmo watched her closely, but made no sign; she knew that no other than herself would discover any trace of the mental conflict which the girl had endured, and she was content—her part in life was almost done now.

For years past her only stimulus to existence had been the future which awaited, and it seemed now as if her soul only waited for the coming ceremonies which should render her position secure, to pass forever from the wild memories of the past.

The young savage—for she truly was such now—had reddened her conscience with a murderous revenge. The last trace of the old life was swept aside forever. The stain of blood upon the woman's soul had fully roused the tiger within, which henceforth only warfare and desolation could appease.

Indomitable as her will, and fiery as her passions, they were fully matched by the craft and cunning of her nature. For years she had made the character of those rude savages her study; she knew them as thoroughly as schoolmen do their books.

Her grandmother had made her familiar also with the leading characteristics of the warriors of the tribes, and any information that she lacked concerning them, her quick perceptions speedily supplied, and taught her to obtain dominion over one by flattering his vanity, another through his greed, until the time should come when her will should be a despotic law that none would dare to dispute.

The coming of the princess among the Nations had been anxiously expected for years. They believed that she had been raised up by the Great Spirit to be a mighty ruler among the tribes.

She had been nearly a fortnight in her new position; the days had been so full of business and activity that she had hardly secured time for a thought not immediately connected with the interests about her.

Delegates from friendly tribes had been constantly arriving to pay their homage to the new queen, and insure amicable relations with the powerful Six Nations.

Every time she stirred out, her people crowded about her with unrestrainable curiosity, for neither warriors nor women had yet been able to overcome the strange interest which had for years been connected with her name.

Numerous councils had been held, at all of which she presided, and the chiefs listened to her opinions with the reverence they had always shown for her ancestor, the great prophet.

A lodge of rude logs, as commodious as they could contrive, had been prepared for her use, and for the summer months it made an agreeable and picturesque residence.

It stood upon the bank of the lake, overshadowed by a knot of lofty pines, and the Indian women, with that love of the beautiful which seems an instinct in the wildest and most ignorant of the sex, had trained forest vines over it in rich luxuriance, and brought fragrant plants from the wilderness to enamel the greensward in front.

The interior was hung with costly furs, and separated in different apartments by curtains of rich skins. The ground was strewn each morning with fresh grasses, and altogether it made up a sylvan retreat, that even a more fastidious person might have found agreeable.

She found time for all these ideas of personal comfort in the midst of her more important occupations, and the Indians made every haste

to perform her wishes, as if she had been a goddess, and they her adorers.

The influence which her antecedents had given her among the great body of the tribe, was increased by her conduct, until it became absolute idolatry, and very soon not even the most powerful chief among the Nations would be allowed to oppose his wishes to her requirements.

Katharine watched the increase of her dominion with panther-like craft, and neglected no means which could insure its results. She was affable and kind in the midst of her haughtiness; she had brought hoarded money from her father's palace, to reward liberally those who served her, and punished so unmercifully those who disobeyed her slightest commands, that their affection and awe increased daily.

Indeed, reverence for her as the descendant of their greatest chiefs, and the one to whom their beloved prophet had bequeathed his power, had become closely blended with their religion, and it was upon that basis that Katharine built up the iron rock of her sway.

But, owing to that very religious superstition with which they regarded her, there was one last submission she must make to their wishes—it would be the very latest, and in the struggle which preceded its accomplishment, the fiendish instincts of her soul gathered their crowning strength.

To the bitterness of her revenge she had sold herself, body and soul. The dying words of the prophet had been that she must wed a chief from the tribe—her choice was to be left free, but there was no escape from the fulfillment of the command, unless she ceased to rule.

When in her girlish days, Katharine had contemplated her present position, and woven schemes for power and aggrandizement, she had trusted that either craft or daring would preserve her from this revolting step.

But once among the people, she saw that she could in no other way make her dominion complete. The matter had been debated on her first arrival, but for several weeks she had managed to postpone its discussion with the skill of Elizabeth herself. Her pledge was given; she was Gi-en-gwa-tah's slave, but not yet would she put on the shackles.

Now the time was coming when it could no longer be deferred. She saw that her artifice had already awakened suspicions among several of the chiefs, and the conduct of all the tribes proved to her that in one way alone could she complete her power.

She had fallen naturally into the order of her new life; she had meditated upon it for so many years, that nothing struck her with the force of novelty, and her feelings had become so deadened by the last struggle which preceded her withdrawal from the whites, that it helped to bring about that state of mind.

But now the moment was at hand which must force her thoughts

out of their grand dreams of power and revenge against the race to whom she was allied by such close ties of blood.

In spite of all she was a woman, young and beautiful, refined and educated as the most polished lady of a European court; she regarded the Indians only as the slaves of her will, and the bare idea of marrying among them was terribly revolting.

Those were strange days and nights which she spent, while revolving the decision which she felt had become unavoidable. The memories of her youth came back in spite of all her self-control, as she lay through the silent midnight on her couch of furs, listening to the moan of the forest wind articulate with murmurs of the past and premonitions of the future. With them sometimes came the groans of Gaston, and the wild cry that rang out from the lips of Adele, when the rifle-shot pierced her. In the night time these memories lost all their zest of vengeance, and became dying moans, that echoed through and through her soul. But they made that soul no better. Katharine was not a person to feel regret—scarcely remorse.

CHAPTER XVI.

MAHASKA, THE WIFE.

KATHERINE was standing in the doorway of her lodge one day, looking out upon the waters of the lake, tinged with the glory of the sunset.

Looking down toward the Indian village, spread out within a bow-shot of her lodge, she saw her grandmother coming up in the direction of her dwelling.

She stood still and awaited her approach. For the first time she noticed the weird change which had come over the woman during the past weeks.

The face so wrinkled and worn by the influence of evil passions, had lost the vitality formerly possessed; the features had grown attenuated and sharp, and she walked slowly and with great difficulty.

Even then, tottering as she was on the threshold of death, it was singular to observe the points of resemblance between the Indian princess and the savage crone.

She tottered feebly along, but, in spite of her weakness, the resemblance was there still, and, had Katherine desired a picture of her old age, she might have found it in the woman before her, although with the personal resemblance all similarity would have

ceased, for there would have been found no comparison for the fearful records with which Katharine strewn her path toward death.

Before the woman reached the lodge, Katharine had turned away her eyes and forgotten her approach in the absorption of her thoughts. Her grandmother drew close to her side, before she was aware, and said, softly :

"Of what is Mahaska dreaming?"

Katharine turned toward her with a frown.

"Is Mahaska a sick girl, that she should have dreams in her waking hours?"

"It was like the face Mahaska used to wear when she lived in the castle of the Governor chief;" persisted the woman jealously.

The frown deepened on the brow of her granddaughter—her cheeks grew more pale.

"To whom does Ahmo speak?" she demanded. "The girl she talks of is no more. I am queen of the Six Nations, the thoughts of the past are nothing to me. I have forgotten them as completely as those forget the earth who have passed into the happy hunting-grounds. How dare Ahmo speak so to me?"

"Ahmo loves her grandchild," she returned, with a timidity which she could not repress, proud and imperious as her nature was; "although a queen, she is still Ahmo's child."

"Mahaska belongs to the Great Spirit, and to her people," she replied coldly, not noticing the withered hand which the woman extended toward her.

The pride of her bearing excited the Indian's admiration, and overpowered the pain she felt at the rejection of her overweening love.

"Mahaska is a great queen!" she exclaimed triumphantly. Ahmo told her that it would be so—she taught her to expect the destiny which she has found among her people."

Katharine turned impatiently.

"What does Ahmo wish?" she demanded; "is she not content? She lives in a great lodge—the people pay her reverence as the grandmother of their queen—what would she more?"

The old woman's eye flashed—she drew herself proudly up.

"Ahmo is accustomed to reverence," she exclaimed. "She was the daughter and the wife of great chiefs—through her, Mahaska draws her greatness."

It was long since the woman had ventured to address Katharine in that tone, as, in spite of her love, her grandmother had grown to fear her anger—she, who had been almost like a chief in her pride and daring—but Katharine's words had wounded her beyond the power of control.

When she saw the wild spasm of fury that swept over her granddaughter's face, the awe and submission she had learned swept back in full force, and before Katharine could speak, she cried hastily.

"Forgive poor Ahmo—she loves her child."

Katharine gave her one mighty glance and then answered coldly, "Let her speak more of these things, then. Mahaska is a queen—the gift of the Great Spirit to her people—let Ahmo feel content that his name is honored and blest by Mahaska's sharing it." The old woman bowed her head in silence. Katharine turned away her eyes and looked out over the lake again.

The fading hues of the sunset tinged the marble face and added to its beauty by that glow. It was impossible to read her thoughts in those motionless features.

After a brief space, the woman whispered humbly ;

"Ahmo has just come from the tribe."

Katharine turned again quickly.

"Was Ahmo sent?" she asked.

The woman shook her head.

"But she wishes to tell Mahaska what she has seen."

"Speak," returned she, with sudden impatience: "What are the tribes doing that Mahaska should heed?"

"The council-fires are kindled," continued the woman; "the chiefs are seating themselves about it."

The woman spoke slowly, and with such evident meaning, that Katharine started, in spite of her self-control.

"What more?" she asked, huskily.

"They will send messengers to Mahaska," she replied; "they will send for her to make her decision."

Again a storm of passion surged into Katharine's face; she clenched her hands hard together and hissed between her teeth:

"Have they not learned to fear me yet?"

The woman only caught the words imperfectly, but the expression of the girl's face revealed her thoughts.

"It was the prophetic law," she said. "Let Mahaska yield here."

"The queen needs no counsel from women," she answered; "let Ahmo advise with squaws."

The old woman bore the insult in silence; she was too anxious that her grandchild should not endanger her power to dare the risk of rousing her obstinacy by any ill-timed anger or complaints.

"They will never dispute her will again," she said.

"Never!" exclaimed Katharine, with terrible emphasis; "never!"

Her head fell upon her bosom, her eyes blazing with fierce resolve, while her fingers interlocked themselves with a wild energy, as if in fancy she already held there the lives of those who had been most active in urging forward this repugnant scheme.

She remained for many minutes lost in those terrible reflections, her face settling into a harder and more determined expression.

Slowly the last rays of sunset faded from the waters and the gray chill of twilight settled around. The pallid gloom fell upon Katharine's stern face with those unwomanly reflections, and appeared to sweep every trace of youth from it.

Her resolution had already been taken—she had seen that the step was inevitable, and nerved herself to meet it—but now that the moment was at hand when a decision must be made, the last struggle of her nature rose up against the iron purpose of her will. She had given her promise, but every feeling of her womanhood revolted against it.

The woman saw that she had forgotten herself and found that the chiefs might come up suddenly and see her standing there with so much of the language of her soul stamped on her features.

“Will Mahaska meet the messengers here?” she asked.

“Yes, here,” she said proudly, “let them come when they will.”

She put back her thoughts with the singular power she possessed and resumed the usual arrogant composure of her manner.

Suddenly her eyes fell upon her dress—it was another point of resemblance between her character and that of the English lioness—the attention she could bestow upon such trifles even in the midst of the most important schemes.

She knew the effect which display and brilliant colors had upon the Indians, and her attire, though adapted to her savage life, was picturesque and becoming.

She turned and entered the lodge, motioning Ahmo to follow. In a few moments she came out with a rich fur mantle thrown over her crimson robe and a string of costly gems, her father's gift long ago, twisted among the coronet of feathers which crowned her head.

She saw two of the chiefs approaching, and taking her station upon the threshold, with her form drawn to its full height, awaited their arrival with imposing majesty.

When the messengers informed her of the wishes of the chiefs that she should join them at the council-fire, she assented with cold dignity, and drawing the folds of her mantle more closely about her, passed down the path in advance.

The two Indians followed, and after them tottered the old woman—regarding her grandchild always, conscious too that her feeble steps were leading her to a final rest. But so long as she was able to carry the tidings of her granddaughter's greatness into the far-off hunting-grounds, Ahmo had no fear of going.

The twilight had deepened and the glare of the council-fire rendered it still more gloomy than the lateness of the hour warranted. The moon was up, hovering directly over the impressive group, while the column of white smoke ascending from the fire looked almost like some heathenish offering they had made to the beautiful planet.

The elder chiefs were grouped about the council-fire; the younger ones who felt the keenest interest in the proceedings—since it was from their number the choice would be made—were gathered near in majestic silence, the firelight glancing over their rich dresses and lighting up many a face that was really a fine type of manly beauty.

Scores of curious women and children were hovering about, and the whole settlement presented an air of unwonted excitement.

Into the midst of the throng Katharine walked and took her stand just where the firelight fell with the most picturesque grace upon her person. An irrepressible murmur went up from the outskirts of the crowd, so struck were those savage natures by her wonderful beauty.

She was indeed a striking object as she stood there, silent and grand in the midst of those wild surroundings.

Her robe of bright crimson, richly embroidered with silk and gold, added a new luster to her complexion; the fur mantle fell back from her shoulders, exposing the exquisitely rounded arms gleaming with costly bracelets, and her whole air had something so regal in it that it would have impressed any being as it did those savage hearts, even more than her extreme beauty.

She was of a grander presence than is usually found in woman, her form finely developed, but so lithe and graceful that she reminded one of a panther in her rapid, noiseless movements.

She cast her great eye around the circle and then said, in a clear, deep voice :

"The chiefs have sent for Mahaska—she is here." The oldest chief of the tribe rose from his place by the council fire, and motioned her with grave courtesy to a seat by his side. She declined it with a wave of the hand.

"Mahaska waits," she said, with her loftiest manner.

There was another brief silence, then the old chief again turned toward her and said :

"Many suns have risen and set since the granddaughter of Nemo came among us. We received her as a gift of the Great Spirit—the people bowed before her and the chiefs made room for her at the council-fire, for she was a chief among our great warriors."

"They have obeyed the bidding of the prophet," she answered; "they have done well—the Great Spirit is pleased with his children. They will become stronger and more victorious than ever—their fields shall prosper and many scalps hang in the warriors' wigwams."

An approving murmur went around the circle and was echoed among the eager crowd.

"Mahaska speaks wisely," returned the old chief. "Her brethren listen to her words as to the voice of the Manitou. But the maiden has not forgotten that a command of the prophet is yet unfulfilled. The chiefs have not been impatient; it is time now that the choice should be made."

Not a tremor shook the stately form, not a shadow on the smooth, pale face; only the mouth wore its most resolute expression, and the great eyes kindled with new brilliancy.

"The maiden has seen our young warriors," pursued the chief. "They are handsome and brave. The chiefs of the Six Nations have met to hear which of our young men she will choose."

She did not stir. An impatient, restless murmur ran through the line of young men, as they bent their eager eyes upon her, and hung upon her answer with breathless anxiety which all their Indian stoicism could not disguise.

The old chief mentioned several of the most prominent among them, enumerating their deeds of valor, and the peculiar virtues for which they were distinguished.

"Mahaska has listened," she said, when he paused.

"Let the chiefs hear her answer then."

Her eyes wandered slowly down the line till they fell upon Gi-en-gwa-tah standing a little aloof from his companions, his restless gaze fastened upon her face.

"The Great Spirit has chosen," she said, moving slowly to his side; "this is the husband of your queen, he slew her enemy and she is his."

While the shouts of the multitude went up, Gi-en-gwa-tah felt her hand settle like iron over his own, but her lips never for an instant lost their placid smile.

Gi-en-gwa-tah clenched her hand in his bronzed fingers, and wrung it in fierce joy. She did not shrink, but her hand, cold as ice in his hot palm, and the fire in her eyes was like madness. Still she was not mad, her heart was sick with loathing, and the white blood curdled around her heart in terrible repulsion, but the iron will of her hard nature conquered all.

A lodge stood in the verge of the forest, with greensward sloping softly from the door down to the lake, till the silver waters kissed it into a fringe of richer greenness. Hemlocks, pines, and one stately tulip tree drooped their rich foliage over it, and garlands of forest flowers covered it like a bower. It was a lovelier spot than the lodge which Katharine had inhabited, Gi-en-gwa-tah, secretly exulting in his knowledge of her choice, had erected his sylvan palace in joyous privacy, and knowing something of her former life, had lavished rude touches of beauty upon it, hoping to win her commendation. Before this lodge a fire was burning which sent its red light far out upon the lake, and filled the drooping branches with rich, golden and green flame color, against a back ground of winding shadows.

"The maiden's choice is good," said the old chief; "the commands of the prophet are obeyed, and the Shawnees have a chief, whose beauty is that of a woman, and whose soul is the soul of a mighty warrior."

Katharine bent her head, till the crown of feathers which encircled it grew flame-tinted in the torchlight. She had withdrawn her hand from Gi-en-gwa-tah and her arms were folded over her heart, then she lifted her head and spoke.

"My name was Katharine, it was a baptism of the white blood in my veins. I have been with you two moons, and now every drop of white blood has been drained from my heart. All that is left burns hot as flame and red as the sunset. I am all Indian, all savage; this warrior shall take me to his lodge, but when I come forth, it shall be with the heart of a panther—a fierce, wild panther—who knows how to hide her claws, and when to use them. Hereafter, if any man calls me Katharine, he dies. I am Mahaska—Mahaska the Avenger, forever and ever."

A murmur of assent ran through the tribe. The air, her clear ringing voice—the savage majesty of her presence had thrilled them with reverence. The magnetism of her evil nature possessed them all. Then she gave her hand to Gi-en-gwa-tah and moved away, through the picturesque groups past the council-fires, and along the margin of the lake towards Gi-en-gwa-tah's lodge.

The tribe watched her with bated breath. A creature so savage, so beautiful, so grandly imperious, filled the whole measure of their least of royalty. They stood, willing slaves, watching her as she appeared, now in shade, now in the light of a council-fire on her way to the bridal lodge, and when she reached it, a wild shout of joy ran through the wilderness, and a wilder dance commenced around the council-fires.

Mahaska went forth from her tribe with her savage bridegroom like a statue of marble, moving side by side with a statue of bronze. The desolation of that moment was awful. It was not thus she hoped to enter upon her sovereignty. With a thrill of relief she saw that Ahmo was still at her side—drawing her breath feebly, and in sudden gasps like a person exhausted by a long race.

They came in front of the lodge, and Gi-en-gwa-tah lifted the skins for his bride to enter. Mahaska paused.

Ahmo sank slowly upon the ground by her side, clutching feebly at her robe.

Mahaska bent her eyes upon her, and saw the great change in her face.

"Is Ahmo weary?" she asked.

The old woman raised her head—her eyes sought Mahaska's, full of the love which had been the one human feeling of her old age.

"Ahmo hears the rush of the swift waters," she said, brokenly; "Nemomo's voice is in her ear."

Mahaska's heart lay too dead within her for any feeling of sorrow, but she stooped and gently raised the woman, while Gi-en-gwa-tah supported her in his arms.

Ahmo's glazing eyes wandered over the moonlit lake—her right hand was raised, and they waited in silence for her words.

"Ahmo goes into the happy hunting-grounds, to tell Nemomo that his people have obeyed his wish," she said.

Slowly she slid from Gi-en-gwa-tah's arms, and fell back upon the greensward that the young warrior had carpeted with flowers, her eyes still fastened upon Mahaska's face, as if her last impulse had been to take the remembrance of its cold beauty with her into eternity.

She murmured a few broken words—her limbs shrank together—her eyes closed—the soul of the aged woman drifted out into the night, so that even the rude ceremony of that savage wedding was sealed by a human death.

At the door of his bridal lodge, Gi-en-gwa-tah gave forth a death wail that went moaning through the forest, and over the moonlit waters like a soul praying for mercy.

They heard it around the camp-fires, and sent back answering moans. The wild dancers dropped in their tracks, shrouled their faces. Groups of young warriors, painted gorgeously for the festival, crowded down to the lake and washed the color from their faces, arms, and bronze chests—thus placing themselves in mourning.

All along the shores of that beautiful lake ran the death dirge. Deep, deep in the forest it went, losing itself mournfully among the great trees, and turning the shiver of the pine leaves into sobs of pain.

In the midst of all this mournfulness Mahaska entered into ~~her~~ new life.

CHAPTER XVII.

AU REVOIR.

KATHARINE had paid the price of a vengeance that was in truth ~~in~~completed. Gaston was not dead, and Adele still lived. Gi-en-gwa-tah's rifle had done its work, but not fatally, both were wounded. The bullet that penetrated Gaston's shoulder had gone through the white arm that was clinging to him in such fond affright. The second shot had wounded the horse, and thus they had been flung to the ground. But quick as lightning they were lifted up again, and borne away in safety. Katharine's fainting fit and fall from her horse, had been their salvation; but for that, they must have been taken and slain outright, as it was, Gi-en-gwa-tah, in good faith believed them dead.

When Adele came to herself, she was in a boat floating gaily down the river. A sharp pain in her arm had aroused her. She started up with a wild fear in her eyes, and looking at the oarsman, cried out:

"Gaston! Gaston! is he dead?"

His own voice reassured her. He was lying at her feet in the bottom of the boat.

"I was only hurt a little," he said, feebly; "something struck my shoulder. That is all. We are safe, my beloved."

She flung herself down by his side with a passionate burst of tears, the first almost that she had shed since her capture.

"Am I with you?" she said. "Ah, my Gaston, it seems like a dream; safe, safe, and you—"

"But you are hurt, love," murmured Gaston, clenching his teeth, to suppress the cry of pain that rose to his lips.

"No; it is nothing; I scarcely feel it. But my father—my ~~pro~~ father, what of him?"

Gaston evaded the question, and in the moan of anguish that followed, she forgot every thing.

"You are weak and faint," she said; "Oh, Gaston, you are hurt, terribly hurt."

"It is nothing; only a little wound in the shoulder, such things are not dangerous."

She bent over him in loving sorrow, she kissed the wounded shoulder, and forgetting her own anguish, strove to soothe his pain away.

Thus, through the long, long night, they floated homeward, happy in despite of the danger they had escaped.

Alas for poor Adele. A second state funeral awaited her in that noble palace home; a funeral unparalleled in all Canada for its magnificence. Then followed a few weeks of rest and convalescence, a long sea voyage and a wedding.

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